What is the connection between healthy communities and local economies?

1. Investing in public health can prevent chronic disease.

Chronic health conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, account for the most illness, disability, and deaths in the United States, and can limit the economic opportunity available to individuals and families. Investing in public health through policies such as increasing access to parks and physical activity, supporting active transportation, and improving access to healthy food can vastly improve chronic disease rates. This can translate into direct dollars saved by reducing health care spending, improving worker health, and increasing worker productivity.
2. Investing in public health has a strong return on investment.
Investing more dollars in public health prevents illness and decreases mortality, reducing future health care spending and strengthening the workforce. Currently, the U.S. directs less than 3% of the estimated $3.6 trillion spend on health toward public health and prevention. Those dollars could be transformative if invested in public health. In fact, the median ROI of public health interventions is 14.3 to 1. So, for every dollar spent on a public health intervention, the return is over $14. Further, policies like high-quality, affordable pre-K are linked to increased high school graduation rates and greater economic mobility, boasting an estimated return of $7-$10 for every dollar spent.

3. Investing in public health improves the economy.
A community where people live healthier, longer lives translates into a workforce with fewer sick days, more productive years, and lower health care costs. For example, public health policies like guaranteed earned sick leave help employees feel secure in their jobs when they fall ill — and protect communities by curbing the spread of contagious illness. In addition to supporting economic security for workers, providing earned sick leave can also save employers as much as $1 billion per year as employees can take the time they need to recover from illnesses — and prevent the spread to other employees. A healthy community and a robust workforce — with fewer sick days and lower healthcare costs — is a strong selling point for businesses expanding to new markets.

Counts Supporting Paid Sick Days Laws

Allegheny County, PA enacted paid sick leave in 2021. Under this ordinance, employers with 26 or more employees have an obligation to notify employees that they are entitled to paid sick leave time.

Montgomery County, MD has protected paid sick leave since 2016. Under this law, an employer with five or more employees must provide one hour of leave for every 30 hours worked.

Bloomington County, MN approved earned sick leave in 2022, requiring that employees earn at least one hour of sick leave for every 30 hours worked.

Cook County, IL passed a paid leave ordinance in 2023 which guarantees at least 40 hours of earned leave to every employee in each 12-month period.