

# Spotlight on Civic Engagement for Health

Lister Hill Center for Health Policy, 2023

## Overview

The mission of the Lister Hill Center for Health Policy (LHC) is “to connect and support those seeking to improve health outcomes through policy. Our aims include enhancing opportunities for policy collaboration through education, creating opportunities for dissemination of information, providing reputable data sources for academic research, and empowering students and community leaders to affect policy change. In 2019 the LHC hosted its first Spotlight, a seminar series centered around a particular topic at the intersection of public health and public policy.

With our Spotlight series, we provide public health professionals, students, policymakers, and community members with the opportunity to explore a public health issue and its policy implications. Our 2023 Spotlight explored the role of civic engagement in improving population health. Together with our partners, the LHC hosted six events, supported two major convenings, and published three articles, among other activities, focusing on this topic. Below is a summary our 2023 Spotlight.

## Events

### January 25, Social Determinants of Health and Policy

In this seminar Dr. Pia Sen provided an overview of the social determinants of health and the role that public policy plays in population health. Dr. Sen also showcased some of the research she’s worked on related to social determinants of health in Alabama.

### February 8, Bridging the Gap Between Research and Policy

For many faculty, the prospect of engaging with the policy change process is daunting and elusive. Dr. Lea Yerby (University of Alabama) shared her experiences interacting with policy makers as a scholar and demystified the process.

*Link to recorded seminar:* <https://youtu.be/fzd6iRXWHC0?si=AjQDT8tO2SwMhwF4>

### April 5, The Fight for Medicaid Expansion

Jane Adams, Campaign Director for the American Cancer Society and leader of the Cover Alabama coalition, detailed the complex field of politics in Alabama in regards to Medicaid expansion. Adams discussed the importance of framing and storytelling in policy advocacy.

*Link to recorded seminar:* <https://youtu.be/UDSV619N1IQ?si=Ulpd7YdaZZvkBJUs>

### September 20, Systemic Reforms to Address Health Policy

Frank Alexander is the Sam Nunn Professor of Law at Emory University, where he created and directed the Project on Affordable Housing and Community Development. He also co-founded the Center for Community Progress, the leading nonprofit in turning “vacant spaces into vibrant places.” In his talk, Alexander discussed the role of civic engagement as a key prerequisite in systemic reforms.

*Link to recorded seminar:* [https://youtu.be/60uRLmuV7\\_U?si=ImRRPlt6S5q9e-3y](https://youtu.be/60uRLmuV7_U?si=ImRRPlt6S5q9e-3y)

### October 10, See the Stories: The Human Side of Medicaid Expansion

Over 250,000 people in Alabama fall into what is known as the “coverage gap,” meaning their income is high enough to render them ineligible for Medicaid but not high enough to qualify for a federally subsidized health plan. For this event we partnered with Alabama Arise to host a panel discussion featuring individuals in this gap.

### December 4, Evaluation of State Policy in the Southeast

Dr. Whitney Rice, an alumna of the School of Public Health, provided an overview of state policies across the southeast which affect women’s health, with a particular focus on reproductive wellbeing in the wake of the Dobbs decision.

## Partner Convenings

### May 13, Medicaid Expansion Advocacy Training

Doctors for America and Alabama Arise joined us for a training on advocacy, with a specific focus on Medicaid expansion.

### October 19, Water and Wastewater Equity Symposium

The UAB Sanitation Health Program – in collaboration with the Alabama Rural Water and Wastewater Management Consortium and with funding provided by the CDC, the Lister Hill Center for Health Policy, and the USDA – hosted its inaugural Water and Wastewater Equity Symposium at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center on Thursday, October 19, 2023, 9am – 4pm. This conference brought together several stakeholders, including federal, state, and local agencies, health providers, educators, non-profits, county commissioners, and water board members to focus on education and solutions to the water and wastewater equity crisis of the Alabama Black Belt.

## Publications

### Policy Watch: Alabama Bill Looks to Decrease Correctional Incentive Time in State Prison System

*Excerpt:* Alabama has been scrutinized by the Department of Justice and legal advocacy organizations for being unsanitary, overcrowded, and dangerous. The state has one of the highest incarcerations in the country, with a mortality rate of more than twice the national average... SB1 would increase the number of incarcerated persons in the state at any given time.

*Link to article:* <https://sites.uab.edu/listerhillcenter/2023/03/06/policy-watch-alabama-bill-looks-to-decrease-correctional-incentive-time-in-state-prison-system/>

### Policy Brief: Health implications of ARPA funding dedicated to on-site wastewater systems in the Black Belt area of Alabama

*Excerpt:* On Tuesday, March 7th, Governor Ivey called for a special session of the Alabama legislature to distribute the remaining \$1.06 billion in federal funding granted by the American Rescue Plan Act, a portion of which is expected to go toward sanitation infrastructure in the Black Belt. ARPA funds could be highlighted as a way to assist with on-site sanitation repairs via grants distributed through ADEM to begin tackling this problem.

*Link to article: <https://sites.uab.edu/listerhillcenter/2023/03/14/policy-brief-health-implications-of-arpa-funding-dedicated-to-on-site-wastewater-systems-in-the-black-belt-area-of-alabama/>*

## Policy Watch: US House of Representatives Proposes Significant Spending Cuts to CDC, Public Health Funding

*Excerpt:* As Congress begins budget discussions for FY24, the House Appropriations Committee released the Fiscal Year 2024 bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee. In the draft, several federal agencies are suggested to see a decrease in funding... The potential budget cuts come on the tails of a significant loss of funding following the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, where an estimated \$1.7 billion in secured funding was recessed.

*Link to article: <https://sites.uab.edu/listerhillcenter/2023/08/15/policy-watch-us-house-of-representatives-proposes-significant-spending-cuts-to-cdc-public-health-funding/>*

## Additional Activities

### Health and Policy Conference Travel Scholarship

In 2023 we formalized a travel scholarship to support student engagement at convenings centered on leveraging policy to improve population health. Kevin Joseph utilized this tool to attend the Society for Public Health Education's 2023 Advocacy Summit in October and present on his experience as a Health Policy Ambassador.

*Link to article: <https://sites.uab.edu/listerhillcenter/2023/12/20/sophe-2023/>*

### Health Policy Ambassadors

The 2022-2023 Ambassadors cohort experienced civic engagement firsthand. One group passed a resolution through the Birmingham City Council to recognize March as Arts in Education Month. Another worked with city officials to develop an implementation plan for the city's upcoming Office of Sustainability and Resilience. The 2023-2024 cohort also started on projects engaging local policy processes.

*Link to Cohort 3 projects: <https://sites.uab.edu/listerhillcenter/programs/health-policy-ambassadors/22-23/>*

*Link to Cohort 4 projects: <https://sites.uab.edu/listerhillcenter/programs/health-policy-ambassadors/23-24/>*