

# Why Health Equity Matters

**At Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alaska, we believe advancing health equity is paramount to the future of healthcare.**

We also know you're committed to creating an equitable workplace and improving the health and well-being of your unique employee population.



**Here's what you need to know:** By analyzing economic data, we can measure the influence of health disparities on employers and explore the potential benefits of reducing or eliminating these disparities.

## **The truth about health inequities**

Every person deserves access to quality, affordable healthcare. However, many historically marginalized communities can face barriers to care. For instance, about 11% of Black Seattle residents lack health insurance coverage, which is more than twice the uninsured rate for white Seattle residents. This is a result of many social determinants of health (SDOH) that impact a person's overall health, functioning, and quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

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## Cost to employers

Health disparities in the workplace, coupled with a lack of access to healthcare, can lead to higher costs for employers and decreased employee satisfaction and productivity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirms chronic illness leads to more sick days and lower productivity. Absenteeism costs associated with chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, smoking, physical inactivity, and obesity all contribute to the productivity losses from employees who miss work, costing employers over \$225 billion annually.<sup>2</sup>

**\$225 B**

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## Effects of change

By focusing on the reduction—or elimination—of health disparities, the United States economy could grow by \$8 trillion by 2050.<sup>3</sup> This economic driver alone demonstrates the importance of gaining a better understanding of health equity and how to address these issues.

## Call to action

As an employer, you play a vital role in the health and well-being of your employees. There are things you can do to ensure your employees live a healthier life. Connecting them to the appropriate resources is one of those things. For information on how to find a culturally competent provider and to view our health equity resources, please visit [premera.com/healthequity](https://premera.com/healthequity).

For more information on how Premera is advancing health equity in the workplace, contact us at [health.equity@premera.com](mailto:health.equity@premera.com).

## References

<sup>1</sup> "Health Disparities." Health Disparities - RSJI, [www.seattle.gov/rsji/racial-equity-research/health-disparities](https://www.seattle.gov/rsji/racial-equity-research/health-disparities). Accessed 12 June 2024.

<sup>2</sup> "Worker Illness and Injury Costs U.S. Employers \$225.8 Billion Annually." CDC Foundation, 28 January 2015. [www.cdcfoundation.org/pr/2015/worker-illness-and-injury-costs-us-employers-225-billion-annually](https://www.cdcfoundation.org/pr/2015/worker-illness-and-injury-costs-us-employers-225-billion-annually)

<sup>3</sup> "Remarks by U.S. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves at the Deputies' Convening on Equitable Economic Growth." U.S. Department of Commerce, 12 November 2021. [www.commerce.gov/news/speeches/2021/11/remarks-us-deputy-secretary-commerce-don-graves-deputies-convening-equitable](https://www.commerce.gov/news/speeches/2021/11/remarks-us-deputy-secretary-commerce-don-graves-deputies-convening-equitable).