



A Community Movement for Social and Economic Justice.

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## For Immediate Release

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### ***Released Today: Health Equity and the Path to Inclusive Prosperity in Buffalo*** *New Profile of Buffalo Highlights Dramatic Inequities and Opportunities to Reverse Them*

BUFFALO, NY — Community-based organizations and advocacy groups in Buffalo have partnered with national research institute PolicyLink to develop a groundbreaking [new profile](#) of the city. *Advancing Health Equity and Inclusive Growth in Buffalo*, released today, highlights the persistent inequities in income, wealth, health, and opportunity in Buffalo. The profile and an accompanying [policy brief](#), *Health Equity: The Path to Inclusive Prosperity in Buffalo*, were developed by PolicyLink and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) at USC, in partnership with Open Buffalo, and with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

“While our research puts a spotlight on the health disparities across Buffalo, the city is well positioned to address these challenges head-on,” said Tracey Ross, Associate Director of the All-In Cities Initiative at PolicyLink. “The city is home to world-class health institutions as well as diligent community based organizations committed to ensuring one’s ZIP code does not limit their life outcomes.”

The new report underscores that while Buffalo is on the brink of a renaissance spurred by millions of public and private investments, if new investments do not address persistent racial and economic inequities, the city’s long-term economic future is at risk. **The data analysis shows that increased equity and inclusion among communities of color in Buffalo would have boosted the region’s economy by \$4.3 billion in 2014 – a nearly 8 percent increase.**

Sam Magavern, executive director of the Partnership for the Public Good, said, “Inequality is bad for our health. PolicyLink’s new report is filled with concrete steps we can take to make Buffalo more equitable and healthy, building on assets we already possess.”

Other key findings in the profile include:



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- Black unemployment is high regardless of education level: Black residents with a high school diploma are as likely to be unemployed as Whites without one
- Working poverty is on the rise for Latinos and African Americans, but not Whites. Twelve percent of all of Buffalo residents ages 25 to 64 worked full-time but earned incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- The racial gap in wages is growing. Between 2000 and 2014, White workers saw their median hourly wage increase, while Latinos and African Americans experienced wage declines.
- Black residents are six times as likely as White residents to live in areas without adequate access to a supermarket.
- While 21 percent of Black workers, 15 percent of Latino workers, and 26 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander workers commute to work by bus, only 5 percent of White workers do. Even middle-income Black workers are seven times as likely as their White counterparts to take public transit to work.
- While both race and economic class impact exposure to pollutants, race has a larger effect. In Buffalo, people of color who live above the federal poverty level have higher rates of exposure to air pollution than both White people and people of color who live in poverty.
- The share of adults living with asthma is higher in the state of New York than in the country overall, and higher still in Erie County. Nearly 11 percent of adults in the county have asthma.
- Black residents of Erie County, who are the most likely to live in areas without access to healthy food, face higher obesity rates than Whites. While genetics matter, research shows other important social and environmental factors influence obesity, including toxic stress, income, and education.

Upon the unveiling of this new research, Franchelle Hart, executive director of Open Buffalo said, “We firmly believe that our city possesses the hearts and minds to overcome our complex legacy of inequity in employment, housing, and health. We’re committed to being a part of that change at the neighborhood level.”

Proposed solutions to these persistent problems include:

- Establish inclusionary zoning for the city.
- Support the creation of community land trusts.
- Increase access to reliable transportation connected to neighborhoods of opportunity.
- Invest in resident-driven arts and culture.
- Host a health forum to define what health means for Buffalo.
- Expand community health worker efforts in the city.

A public presentation (media opportunity) and panel discussion will mark the release of this research. The event will begin **today at 12pm at the Merriweather Library (1324 Jefferson Ave., Buffalo)**. Attendees will hear from, and interact with, the following local officials and experts:

- **Dennice Barr**, Community First Alliance
- **Jessica Bauer Walker**, Executive Director, Community Health Worker Network of Buffalo



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- **Dr. Gale R. Burstein**, Commissioner of Health, Erie County
- **Sam Magavern**, Director, Partnership for the Public Good and Board Member, Open Buffalo
- **Dr. Samina Raja**, University at Buffalo
- **David A. Rivera**, Majority Leader and Niagara District Representative, Buffalo Common Council
- **Tracey Ross**, Associate Director, PolicyLink

**What:** PolicyLink research presentation and panel discussion

**When:** Monday, May 8, 12 pm

**Where:** Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Library, 1324 Jefferson Ave, Buffalo

**Access this original research online here:**

Buffalo Profile: [Advancing Health Equity and Inclusive Growth in Buffalo](#)

Policy Brief: [Health Equity: The Path to Inclusive Prosperity in Buffalo](#)

#### **About PolicyLink**

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works®. For more information, visit [PolicyLink.org](http://PolicyLink.org).

#### **Open Buffalo**

Open Buffalo is a Community Movement for Social and Economic Justice.

It is a civic initiative to make major, long-term improvements in justice and equity in the City of Buffalo.

It is an unprecedented collaboration among a diverse group of partners and allies. For more information, visit [OpenBuffalo.org](http://OpenBuffalo.org).

For more media inquiries, please contact Alexis Stephens at PolicyLink ([ASstephens@policylink.org](mailto:ASstephens@policylink.org), 212-629-9570 x 216) or Max Anderson at Open Buffalo ([max@openbuffalo.org](mailto:max@openbuffalo.org), 716-243-8777 x 103).

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