



# Ensuring Access to Quality Healthcare

**Florida's United Ways urge the 2021 Florida Legislature to increase support for access to high quality healthcare and behavioral health services for all Floridians.**

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## BACKGROUND

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the racial/ethnic disparities that exist in Florida through increased risk of serious illness and death among communities of color. These racial and ethnic disparities result, in part, from higher rates of the uninsured in black and brown communities which creates barriers to COVID-19 testing and treatment.
- Florida ranks 47 out of the 50 states in affordability and access to healthcare.
- Behavioral health providers report increased numbers of reaching out for assistance with anxiety and depression due financial insecurity, social unrest, isolation.

## WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

- 567,000 Floridians are caught in a health insurance “coverage gap,” with incomes too high for traditional Medicaid, but too low to qualify for subsidies to purchase coverage on healthcare.gov. People of color represent nearly half of the Floridians caught in the coverage gap. People of color are more likely to be uninsured, lack a usual source of care, and have underlying medical conditions such as diabetes and asthma which make them more susceptible to serious illness due to COVID-19.
- Of the Floridians caught in the coverage gap: 54% are in a working family or considered to be ALICE. This has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Even before the pandemic, a total of 2.7 million Floridians were uninsured.
- Since March 26<sup>th</sup>, 211 in Florida has received over 11,000 calls for mental health assistance or for suicidal ideation. This is in comparison to 20 calls/day for the entire state on February 28<sup>th</sup>, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## THE PROBLEM

- The uninsured have traditionally faced much greater challenges accessing care. These disparities are exacerbated during a health crisis like COVID-19. It is imperative that Florida prioritize increasing access to healthcare coverage for all Floridians, with a particular emphasis on communities of color.
- The Department of Children and Families recently asked that Behavioral Health providers participate in budget cutting exercise to reduce funds by 3-6%. During a time of crisis, when a record number of individuals are reaching out for services, this funding cut would be detrimental to health of Floridians.

## UNITED WAY'S REQUEST:

**Florida United Ways urge the 2021 Florida Legislature to:**

- **IMPROVE** access to affordable healthcare for Floridians, with a focus on vulnerable low-income populations.
- **MAINTAIN** targeted funding for prevention and treatment services for all behavioral health services.
- **MAXIMIZE** home and community-based services for older adults to reduce nursing home costs and waitlists.