

For Immediate Release  
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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR RACIAL JUSTICE IN HEALTH CARE REFORM  
Nebraska Health Care for America Now Details Health Disparities and Emphasizes  
Opportunity for Equality in Legislation

\*\*\* Read the Report Here: [http://neappleseed.org/docs/ne\\_equities\\_report\\_071509.pdf](http://neappleseed.org/docs/ne_equities_report_071509.pdf)

Lincoln, NE - Today, the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, as a part of Health Care for America Now (HCAN) - the nation's largest health care campaign - released a report showing how communities of color are adversely affected by our nation's broken health care system and emphasized the need for comprehensive health care reform that corrects this inequality and injustice.

"Unequal Lives: Health Care Discrimination Harms Communities of Color in Nebraska" explains how the nation's more than 103 million people of color suffer disproportionately in our health care system. For example:

- The infant death rate for whites is 5.1 per 1,000 live births, one-third of the rate of 14 for African Americans.
- Life expectancy for African Americans in Nebraska is 6 to 10 years shorter than that of whites.
- About 33 percent of Latinos and 26 percent of African Americans in Nebraska are uninsured, compared with 11 percent of whites.
- In Nebraska, 32 percent of Latina women and 31 percent of African American women received no early prenatal care, compared with 13 percent for whites.

"We must provide quality, affordable health care to everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, or income," said Jennifer Carter, Director of the Health Care Access Program at Nebraska Appleseed. "As we build on what works in our current health care system and fix what doesn't, we need to address a long history of discrimination in medical treatment and reorient the way doctors, hospitals, drug makers, medical device makers, insurance companies, and government programs provide care."

Legislation under consideration in Congress right now would offer one of the best opportunities since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 to erase persistent health disparities. The House health reform bill would strengthen and expand programs promoting health workforce diversity, identify key health and health care disparities in addressing prevention and wellness, require insurers to contract with essential community providers, provide adequate grant funding for delivery of preventive health services in underserved

communities, and designate a new Assistant Secretary for Health Information whose job it would be to measure, study, and reduce health and health care disparities.

"Unequal Lives" also offers the Health Care for America Now campaign's recommendations to erase racial and ethnic health care disparities, including the call for an affordable benefit package that provides a defined, comprehensive set of age- and gender-appropriate services that promote health in a linguistically and culturally competent manner. In addition:

- Coverage should be backed by adequate reimbursement rates and effective performance incentives that promote provider participation, change the inefficient behavior of doctors and hospitals, and promote improved health for people of color.
- Substantial improvements in health and life expectancy will be achieved by addressing the social determinants of health, including a clean environment, occupational safety, safe neighborhoods and access to nutritious food.
- The nation must address chronic shortages of health professionals in communities of color and marginalized populations.
- Congress should implement mechanisms to support safety-net institutions and drive quality-improvement initiatives in all health care settings.
- Stakeholders and the public should be given good data by insurers and health care providers on race, ethnicity and ethnic sub-population, socioeconomic position, primary language, age, gender, and gender identity.

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Nebraska Appleseed, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest law project, is a national leader in addressing social problems facing vulnerable children without loving and permanent homes, low-income families working hard to make ends meet, and new immigrants seeking a better life. Nebraska Appleseed's current year action plan and description of its six program areas, significant litigation and policy reform successes, and broad-based accomplishments can be found at [neappleseed.org](http://neappleseed.org).

Nebraska Appleseed is a part of the Appleseed network of independent state-based public interest law centers working to identify and address social injustices. The Appleseed network seeks to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism and policy expertise by addressing root causes and producing practical, systemic solutions with broad implication. For more information visit [appleseednetwork.org](http://appleseednetwork.org).

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