

Preserve and Expand the Public Health Resources Under the COVID State of Emergency

The logo for People's CDC, featuring the text "People's CDC" in a purple serif font inside a white circle.

DO NOT End the State of Emergency! Protect Everyone!

The US has suffered more from Covid-19 than other high-income nations. The state of emergency increased access to Medicaid, and assured free access to vaccines, tests, masks, and treatments for all US residents, including more than 30 million uninsured Americans. Even with these additional resources, the poor US government response has led to a nearly 3-year decline in average life expectancy, and larger declines in low-income and communities of color. Removing resources such as tests and care during the ongoing pandemic will cause a deadly disaster and worsen these intolerable inequities. The pandemic has NOT ended, and the US lacks sound public health policy to move to long-term management. *We must fight to preserve and expand these wins. Moving forward, the US public deserves better.*

These facts demonstrate the dangers of ending the emergency:

- Covid-19 continues to kill more than 450 people a day as of February 2023. Over 93% of Americans live in areas with substantial or high transmission rates.
- There are 14,000 new cases reported per day nationwide, despite diminishing access to testing (NYT Tracker).
- Approximately 30,000 people with Covid-19 are hospitalized in the US, nearly 40% of them under age 60 as of early February (NYT Tracker).
- Covid-19 continues to mutate rapidly, and future mutations may be more severe. New vaccines will be needed, and people must be able to afford them. Without federal funding under the state of emergency, drug companies will charge the public over \$100 per shot, clearly not affordable for millions.
- Seniors on Medicare will lose access to free telehealth in 2024.
- Most people will lose access to free rapid and PCR tests. It's vital to diagnose people who get Covid-19 so they can isolate and get needed care in order for the US to control the pandemic and decrease deaths and Long COVID.
- Filling a prescription for Paxlovid, which can reduce the length and severity of Covid-19, will cost between \$100-130 and require a doctor's visit, clearly unaffordable for most people.
- As many as 15 million people could be cut off from Medicaid (depending on state policies) starting in April, losing access to general medical care as well as Covid-19 care.
- Data collection and reporting on Covid-19 test positivity, hospitalizations, and more will diminish, leaving the nation without good warnings of virus trends.

As the People's CDC has documented (<https://peoplescdc.org/>), much is wrong with the US response to Covid-19, even with the state of emergency. Many workers lack sick leave, making it hard to isolate when infected. Food and housing insecurity are still widespread, and eviction moratoriums are no longer common. There is a huge deficit of adequate ventilation in many schools, workplaces, modes of transportation, and other public places. Ongoing funding is needed to continue to develop new vaccines, treatments, and research on Long COVID, which affects tens of millions and keeps at least 4 million people from working. Ending the state of emergency will let drug companies raise prices to reap billions in profits on top of the billions they have already made.

The latest Commonwealth Fund report (2022) on health in 12 high income countries has shown that the US has the poorest health outcomes across all income levels, but the suffering is not equally distributed. Covid-19, like almost all health problems, disproportionately affects and kills people who are low-income, Black, Latin, Native, immigrant, elderly, and disabled. Thus, we demand affordable health care and an end to evictions and food shortages.

Covid-19 has exposed the extreme inequalities and ineffectiveness of a system that puts profit over people and perpetuates *inequity and racism*. That is *the* overarching emergency.

These resources and policies aid all of us. We demand:

- Universal access to free healthcare, vaccines, tests, and high-quality masks (N-95, N-99, KN-95, or KF-94)
- Expanded Medicaid
- No cuts in Medicare
- Free Paxlovid and other treatments
- Free telehealth
- Affordable, quality housing-No evictions
- Food stamps for all who need them
- Options to work from home
- Covid-19 safe, well-ventilated schools, workplaces, public transit, and indoor spaces
- Secure, non-precarious employment with safe workplaces
- Paid sick leave for all

Share this statement and ask your organizations to endorse these demands. Sign the petition at: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/maintain-healthcare>

For more information, contact the People's CDC at <https://peoplescdc.org>