



Health Care Happenings

June 2025

Achieving zero health disparities by promoting equity-centered, trauma-informed health care across Missouri.

Community Health
Commission Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear partners, advocates, and friends,

Welcome to the very first *CHCM Quarterly Newsletter*! It's been more than two years since we last connected in this format, and in that time, so much has changed—not just for our organization, but for the communities we serve. What hasn't changed is our commitment to health equity and our belief that every Missourian deserves the opportunity to live a long, fulfilling life—no matter their zip code, insurance status, race, or income.

Since merging in late 2023, we haven't just built a new organization—we've been laying the foundation for meaningful impact by strengthening our systems, expertise, and community connections. We are now operating statewide – with real strength locally – through dedicated teams in St. Louis, Kansas City, and Southeast Missouri. Our newly launched website reflects that growth—offering resources, reflections, and a home for the stories that are shaping Missouri's path forward.

Over the last several months, CHCM staff have been on the ground—listening, showing up, and standing alongside community. We've convened Medicaid town halls, grassroots roundtables and advisory sessions in the aftermath of a generational natural disaster, facilitated advisory board meetings across the state, and walked with partners through moments of transition, crisis, and hope – giving voice to community leaders who've stepped forward with solutions already rooted in lived experience. Our work is not to lead *for* community—but to partner *with* community to make visible the barriers and the solutions that already exist.

This spring, we began developing our next strategic plan—co-created with those most impacted by health inequities. Because we know that transformation only happens when those closest to the pain are closest to the power. The photos in this issue offer a glimpse of the energy and vision shaping our next chapter.

At the same time, the threats to Medicaid access in Missouri remain a central concern. Through our *Through Our Eyes* storytelling campaign, we're lifting up the lived experiences behind the data and challenging political narratives that strip people of dignity and care. These stories are more than evidence—they are our rallying cry. We invite you to share them, speak out, and join us as we defend dignity – and essential care – for every Missourian.

Our growing partnership with [REACH Healthcare Foundation](#), along with others across the philanthropic and healthcare sectors, continues to strengthen our ability to bridge community leadership and systems accountability. Whether responding to crisis or reimagining what health systems can become, CHCM's role remains clear: to connect, amplify, and build the conditions for equity to take root.

This newsletter is just one way we stay in conversation. But more than that, it's a reflection of what's possible when we organize around love, justice, and shared purpose. I hope you'll read this issue, share the stories you're moved by, and keep walking with us toward equity – because together, we are the change Missouri deserves.

With gratitude and resolve,



Chief Executive Officer
Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM)



New Website Launch

COMMUNITY HEALTH COMMISSION LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

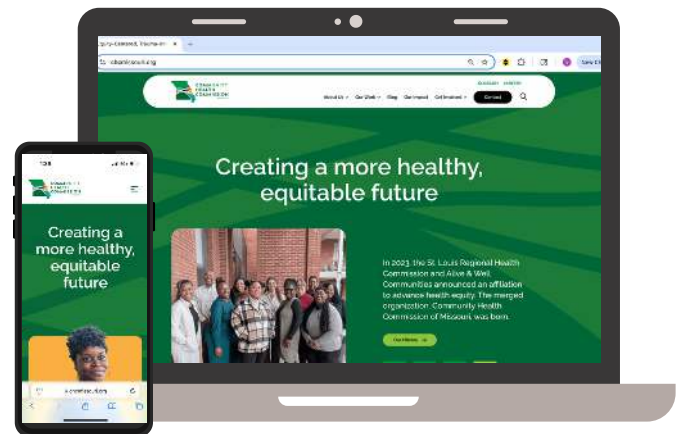
In April, we launched the [new digital home](#) of the Community Health Commission of Missouri.

Our brand new site makes it easier to explore CHCM's work, connect with resources, and take action for health equity across Missouri.

We're proud to reintroduce ourselves as a newly relaunched, equity-centered, trauma-informed public health intermediary. We work across systems, sectors, and communities to achieve one bold goal: zero health disparities.

This website is more than a resource hub. It's an invitation. We invite you to explore who we are, what we do, and how you can join us.

 [Visit our new website](#)



"Whether you're a community leader, policymaker, provider, or partner, there's a place for you in this work. Real change takes all of us, and we're stronger when we move together."

- RIISA RAWLINS,
CEO OF CHCM



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Protecting Medicaid

Medicaid is facing **serious threats** under the proposed federal budget reconciliation bill, which could lead to devastating coverage losses and service cuts across Missouri. While the program directly serves more than **1.3 million Missourians**, the effects of these cuts would **ripple across the entire state**, undermining hospitals, clinics, and community care systems. At CHCM, we are leading efforts to **protect Medicaid** through advocacy and storytelling that highlights what is at stake.



OUR ADVOCACY EFFORTS

CHCM joins partners across Missouri to advocate for Medicaid funding at the state capitol

On Monday, June 2, CHCM was invited to speak at a press conference organized by the **Missouri Budget Project** and hosted in Jefferson City about the importance of protecting Medicaid funding in the latest federal budget reconciliation bill.

Dr. Danielle Binion joined other health policy experts and community members, sharing her own experience navigating Medicaid coverage (and lack thereof) and the importance of this safety net program to the health and financial wellbeing of the state of Missouri.

Other CHCM team members present for the conference included Grace Cobble, Senior Manager of Communications and Storytelling; Robert Gibson, Director of Policy and Advocacy; and Aja Owens, Manager of Advocacy and Mobilization. To read Dr. Binion's testimony, click [here](#).

"I relied on Medicaid until I was 18, then I spent five years uninsured, managing asthma without coverage. Today, too many of our neighbors, young people, and working families face that same risk of losing coverage. Access to healthcare should never be a luxury. We must protect and strengthen Medicaid for Missouri's future."

DR. DANIELLE
BINION, CHIEF
STRATEGY OFFICER
OF CHCM



Protecting Medicaid

OUR ADVOCACY EFFORTS (CONT.)

CHCM Co-hosts “Medicaid at Risk” panel discussion in partnership with the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis

On June 5, CHCM, in partnership with the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis, hosted a Medicaid discussion panel (Medicaid at Risk: Data, Stories, and Strategies to Protect Access) to examine the program’s reach and impact through data, lived experience, and community-centered strategies for civic engagement.

Panelists, featuring partners from [Legal Services of Eastern Missouri](#), the [Brown School](#), the [Missouri Budget Project](#), and [Missouri Foundation for Health](#), explored how individuals and organizations can help ensure Medicaid continues to reflect the needs of the people it serves, with a focus on equity, access, and the power of community voice in shaping health policy.

Co-moderated by Riisa Rawlins, CHCM CEO and [Robert Gibson](#), CHCM Policy & Advocacy Director, the event was a deeply engaging and invigorating conversation. If you were unable to attend the virtual panel, please find the recording [here](#).

The poster features the title "Medicaid at Risk: Data, Stories, and Strategies to Protect Access" in green. Below the title, it states: "Medicaid remains essential to the health and stability of families across Missouri and the nation." It then describes the event as co-hosted by the Community Health Commission of Missouri and the Brown School at WashU, examining the program's reach and impact through data, lived experience, and community-centered strategies. The poster lists six featured panelists with their names and titles, each accompanied by a small circular portrait. The event details section indicates it is on Thursday, June 5th, from 12:00pm to 1:30pm, and is available online via Zoom. Logos for WashU, Brown School, and the Community Health Commission of Missouri are at the bottom, along with a QR code.

CHCM Submits Testimony in Support of City Department of Health Funding

At the Friday, April 25th City of St. Louis Board of Estimate and Apportionment hearing, CHCM Chief Strategy Officer [Dr. Danielle Binion](#) delivered powerful testimony urging full and sustained funding for the St. Louis Department of Health. Speaking both as a public health leader and proud daughter of St. Louis' 10th Ward, Dr. Binion emphasized the urgent need to invest in local solutions addressing violence, mental health, HIV/STIs, and barriers to care. Dr. Binion lifted up joint efforts like PrepareSTL, community listening sessions, and the City's Health Equity Plan as examples of collaborative work that must continue.

Find the full version of CHCM's testimony [here](#).



Protecting Medicaid

THROUGH OUR EYES

Through our *Through Our Eyes* storytelling campaign, CHCM is compiling powerful stories from Missouri community members, illustrating the critical role Medicaid plays in the lives of all Missourians and what is at risk if access is rolled back, restricted, or underfunded.

WHY STORYTELLING MATTERS

In a recent New York Times op-ed, Senator Josh Hawley cited the story of one of his constituents to highlight what's at stake with cuts to Medicaid, demonstrating the power of personal narratives to influence lawmakers. Personal stories bring the data to life, showing how Medicaid supports people across Missouri in ways that numbers alone can't capture.

Medicaid One-Pagers

We're working to connect stories to data by developing a series of one-pagers that highlight the impact of Medicaid on Missouri communities. They focus on issues such as work requirements, rural health, a provider's perspective, Medicaid expansion, and community member experiences, illustrating stakes of proposed Medicaid cuts. Find these [one-pagers here](#).

These resources aim to:



inform advocates,



engage lawmakers, and



strengthen the case for protecting Medicaid!



Many of our families are already struggling. If a child requires 24-hour awake care with a ventilator and the parents have a work requirement, how will those children ever be discharged?

- Missouri Health Service Provider

Over 5 million people will lose coverage nationwide if work requirement is enforced.



Share your Missouri Medicaid story [here](#).


Your voice matters and your experience can drive change!

Protecting Medicaid

OUR STORYTELLING INITIATIVES (CONT.)

In Defense of Medicaid


On our blog, we're sharing the powerful stories from individuals whose lives have been shaped by Medicaid, as well as from providers who witness its impact firsthand in Missouri residents.

The first narrative we shared comes directly from Riisa Rawlins, CEO of CHCM, social worker, and parent – offering a first-hand perspective on how early in her journey, Medicaid has been a lifeline for accessing essential care for her and her children. Read her full testimony [here](#). 



“ I've navigated our health care system from multiple vantage points—without insurance, with Medicaid, and with comprehensive employer-sponsored coverage. I've felt the sting of medical debt while working three jobs, attending college full-time, and raising a young child. I've made impossible choices between rent and a prescription, groceries and a specialist visit.

I also know the relief that comes with having health coverage—the clarity and calm that comes from knowing your child's asthma flare-up won't force you into debt or homelessness. That peace of mind allowed me to focus on school, build a career, and support my family with dignity.

We also shared the story of Dr. Fred Rottnek, a physician, public health advocate, and Director of Community Medicine, Program Director of the Addiction Medicine Fellowship, SSM Health/Saint Louis University School of Medicine. Read his full testimony [here](#). 

“

“For over 20 years, I have been a physician working in jails, prisons, and detention facilities in St. Louis City and County. And I always find it rewarding when an individual's blood pressure is controlled, or their blood sugars normalize, or they can walk up a flight of stairs without pausing to take a breath. In recent years...individuals behind bars can sign up for Medicaid so that when they are released, they can continue these medications with a provider in the community.”



We encourage you to read and share these testimonies widely with policymakers and stakeholders to show just how essential this program is to our communities.

REACH Partnership

DEIAB COMMUNITY-CENTERED CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS



In partnership with [REACH Healthcare Foundation](#), CHCM has partnered with the REACH Healthcare Foundation to provide capacity-building support to organizations through equity-centered, trauma-informed Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging (DEIAB) learning collaboratives. These workshops provide practical strategies to strengthen organizational DEIAB identity, drive meaningful systems change, and foster a healthier, more inclusive workplace culture.

To date, we have provided the following workshops:



April 2, 2025

Building Resilience and Supporting Well-being for DEIAB Practitioners & Advocates



May 8, 2025

Policy Check: What Has Changed in the DEIAB Landscape



June 5, 2025

Assessing Cultural and Structural Competence in Building a Team



Register today for the last two workshops in this series!

Strategies for Inclusive Community Engagement and Leadership



July 10th,
10-11:15am

[Register](#)

Data-Informed and Data-Driven DEIAB Practices



August 6th,
12-1:15pm

[Register](#)

NEW DIRECTOR TEAM

MEET CHCM'S NEW DIRECTORS: DRIVING EQUITY FORWARD ACROSS MISSOURI

The Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM) is thrilled to formally introduce our three exceptional Directors. Their expertise, vision, and community-rooted experience will deepen our impact across the state and strengthen our shared mission of achieving zero health disparities.

Sean Ivory, Director of Implementation – Southeast Missouri

[Sean Ivory](#) brings more than a decade of leadership experience and a strong background in operational strategy to CHCM. Based in Jackson, MO, Sean leads our Southeast Missouri efforts with a focus on local implementation, community engagement, and team development. A Southeast Missouri State graduate and longtime community advocate, Sean is passionate about advancing equity through stability, innovation, and strong partnerships.



Bridget Jones, MBA, Director of Development

With over 20 years of fundraising and nonprofit leadership, [Bridget Jones](#) now leads CHCM's development strategy. She has a proven track record, having raised over \$100 million for community and faith-based institutions, and previously founded a workforce development organization in St. Clair County. Bridget's commitment to equity and community empowerment in and out of the St. Louis region shines through in her work—and in her personal passions, which include gardening and teaching ballet.



Robert Gibson, M.S, MPH, Director of Policy and Advocacy

A seasoned strategist and public health advocate, [Robert Gibson](#) joins CHCM out of Kansas City to lead our policy and advocacy efforts statewide. His career spans state agencies, foundations, and research institutions, with a focus on health equity, social determinants of health, and chronic disease prevention. Robert's leadership will help transform community-voiced priorities into lasting policy solutions grounded in justice and impact.



We're proud to have these three dynamic leaders on board as we continue to build a healthier, more equitable Missouri. Meet more of [our team](#) on our website!

STRATEGIC PLANNING



On May 21, 2025, the Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM) brought together its Board of Commissioners and Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee, which includes members from our three advisory boards, for a full-day strategic planning retreat focused on shaping the next phase of the organization's work. With CHCM's mission to eliminate health disparities at the center, the retreat provided space to reflect on what we've learned from communities across Missouri, identify our most urgent priorities, and map out a clear vision for how we grow our impact. Through deep discussion and collaborative exercises, board members explored how CHCM fits within the state's health equity landscape—and what it will take to meet the moment.

Throughout the day, the group developed actionable language to guide our programs, partnerships, and advocacy moving forward. From refining CHCM's business model to co-creating a strategy screen for evaluating future opportunities, the retreat helped sharpen our focus and align around a shared path. We're so grateful for the work of our team and partners to date and look forward to rolling out our finalized strategic priorities this fall!



CHCM IN THE MEDIA

POWER TO THE PEOPLE: ADVANCING IMPACT THROUGH PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING



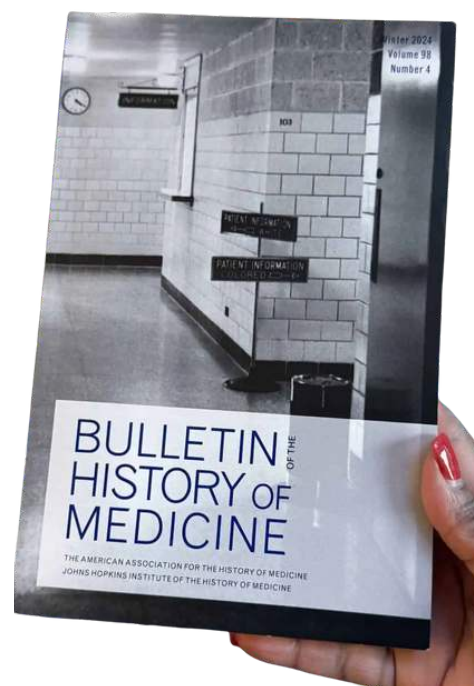
In a [compelling piece](#) for Grantmakers In Health (GIH) 's "Views from the Field," our CEO, Riisa R. Rawlins, explores how participatory budgeting (PB) can revolutionize health philanthropy by placing decision-making power directly into the hands of those most affected by health disparities. Drawing from CHCM's successful [Seniors Community Revitalization & Development Fund](#) pilot, she illustrates how PB fosters transparency, trust, and community-driven impact. This approach not only aligns funding with real community needs but also strengthens partnerships and ensures sustainable investments in health equity.

Read the [full article](#) to learn how CHCM is leading the way in reimagining health funding through participatory budgeting.

DR. DANIELLE BINION CO-AUTHORS NEW ARTICLE ON DECOLONIZING ACADEMIC MEDICINE

We are proud to celebrate our Chief Strategy Officer, Dr. Danielle Binion, on the publication of her latest scholarly work! Dr. Binion is a co-author of the article ["Just Listen to Us": The Role of Oral Histories in Decolonizing Academic Medicine](#), published in the Bulletin of the History of Medicine (Winter 2024, Volume 98, Number 4).

In this powerful piece, Dr. Binion and her colleagues explore how oral histories can serve as critical tools for confronting systemic racism in medical education. The article highlights community-driven storytelling as a means to document harm, elevate marginalized voices, and chart paths for authentic repair in academic health centers. Read the full article [here](#). Please contact [Dr. Binion](#) if you have any additional questions about the article or project overall.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Join us for an upcoming meeting or workshop! All CHCM advisory board meetings are open to the public, and we invite you to get involved.

Have questions? Contact Joy Kuebee by emailing executiveassistant@chcmmissouri.org.

Strategies for Inclusive Community Engagement and Leadership Workshop



July 10th,
10-11:15am

[Register](#)



DEIAB Capacity Building
Workshop Series

Data-Informed and Data-Driven DEIAB Practices



August 6,
12-1:3pm

[Learn more](#)



DEIAB Capacity Building
Workshop Series

Board of Directors Meeting



August 20th,
8:30-9:30am

[Learn more](#)



GET IN TOUCH

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