

# The Path Forward

A bold policy agenda *for young people, by young people.*

It is increasingly clear our era will be defined by the period before Covid-19 and the new normal that will emerge in its wake. The global pandemic revealed outdated and weakened public policy frameworks; economic and health care injustices; and a public reckoning of racial inequities. To make a meaningful shift in our country's approach to policy, our leaders must build an agenda that tackles the root causes of today's problems; envisions a new model for policymaking that is grounded in an inclusive, diverse, and equity-oriented worldview; and creates policy solutions to promote broadly shared prosperity. And that agenda must center young people.

**The Path Forward was not just developed *for* young people. It was developed *by* young people.** We at Young Invincibles believe that lasting social change is created by empowering local young adult leaders with deep community ties who can design and drive the work. That's the underpinning for this entire set of policy recommendations.

Looking beyond Covid is not just needed—it is necessary. Our health care system has changed little since its post–World War II creation. Our education system has been slow to modernize and integrate classroom and distance learning. Our economy has learned little from the economically induced failures of the last global financial crisis and how to protect the most vulnerable.

This moment calls for an affordable, accessible, and equitable higher education system that directs public investment to these essential institutions, and couples that investment with accountability for improved incomes that empower graduates from populations long shut out and marginalized by higher education policies and practices.

This moment calls for expanding the Affordable Care Act's subsidies, setting up auto-enrollment mechanisms for the uninsured, and capping the price of medical services, investing in campus-based mental health services, funding safe alternatives to police intervention, and sustaining expanded telehealth.

This moment calls for supporting low wage workers, increasing wages, and dismantling structural racism in employment to build a more resilient system of social supports that better protect young people against future pandemics and other emergencies. A bolder step is needed to end arbitrary and punitive policies that restrict young people from food, housing, and other basic needs.

We do not know yet what the future will look like—but it is certain that the path forward must be different both for the institutions and systems serving young people and the policy choices we pursue to ensure broadly shared prosperity.

# A BOLD AGENDA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



60%

of young people surveyed support full student loan forgiveness for all borrowers.



70%

of young people agree that the government should help cover living expenses at public two- and four-year colleges.

## Addressing Student Debt and College Affordability

- Cancel student debt up to \$50,000 in student loan debt for households making less than \$100,000 a year
- Establish a strong federal-state partnership that sends significant new funding to states

## Revolutionizing Course Delivery and Degree Program Structure

- Public and private nonprofit institutions must develop high-quality online-based, university based programs that meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's students
- Make an historic investment in expanding broadband connectivity to stem the digital divide

## Acting on the Equity Imperative

- Universities must examine their historic ties to slavery and racial segregation, then develop affirmative, measurable plans for improving campus cultures
- Strengthen preparation, recruitment, support, and retention for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous faculty
- Dismantle merit-based aid programs and focus resources on meeting the financial needs of low- to middle-income students
- Transform on- and near-campus policing
- Institutions should disassociate themselves from higher education ranking systems

## Implementing Student-Ready Models of Support

- Implement models of support that address student needs beyond tuition
- Ensure students' mental, emotional, and physical health needs can be met

# ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL, EQUITABLE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL



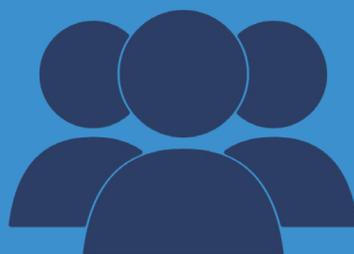
78%

of young people surveyed strongly or somewhat favor the expansion of the ACA with a public option.



76%

of respondents have an extremely or somewhat favorable opinion of the ACA.



75%

strongly or somewhat favor Medicare-for-All.

## Securing universal, equitable health coverage for all

- Medicaid Expansion in all 50 states
- Expand Medicaid and ACA coverage to all young people, regardless of immigration status.
- Expand Medicaid coverage to 12-months postpartum for young mothers
- Create a Universal Public Plan to Compete on the Individual Market
- Create an auto-enrollment program for all young adults under 250% FPL

## Eliminating drivers of medical debt

- Eliminate the subsidy cliff and increase ACA subsidies
- End surprise billing practices
- Fix the “family glitch”
- Prevent medical debt collections
- Lower prescription drug costs
- Pilot new value-based insurance design strategies

## Addressing the inequitable quality of care that drives racial and ethnic disparities

- Ensure health insurance plans continue to provide coverage for mental health
- Invest in the mental health workforce – particularly those who are young, people of color, members of the LGBTQ community, first generation students and immigrants
- Fund research to combat systemic racism in public health and create anti-racist health policies
- Make an historic investment in expanding telehealth
- Fund safe alternatives to calling the police during a mental health crisis
- Invest in campus-based mental health care

# AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



60%

of young people surveyed support a minimum wage of at least \$10 per hour.



49%

of respondents say that federal funding for apprenticeship programs should be increased.

## Increasing wages and dismantling structural racism in employment

- Increase the federal minimum wage to \$15.00/hour
- Launch a robust, infrastructure-focused, federally-backed jobs program
- Commit resources and time to identify policies that compensate for historical economic disenfranchisement, including addressing the legacy of racist, exploitative economic policies
- Support businesses retaining their employees and protecting employee benefits

## Promoting an inclusive recovery beyond the Covid-19 crisis

- Make an historic investment in expanding Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding for youth programs
- Expand apprenticeship and other work-based learning models, including federal work-study
- Provide holistic supportive services to fund the transportation vouchers, emergency utility and rental assistance, equipment purchases, and child care costs of workers
- Ban workforce discrimination based on prior convictions
- Compensate interns for their labor. All interns, regardless of industry, should be compensated monetarily.
- Strengthen the Child Tax Credit by extending the benefit to children 18 years of age, distributing benefit monthly, in advance and without unnecessary earnings requirements

## Strengthening social programs to address basic human needs

- Expand the federal Earned Income Tax Credit to more low-wage childless adults by expanding the eligibility age range to 19 years old
- Eliminate unnecessary and punitive SNAP eligibility requirements
- Remove work requirements for students to qualify for food assistance
- Make an historic investment in expanding the availability of affordable housing by passing a National Housing Trust Fund
- Make an historic investment in broadband digital access to educational resources
- Make an historic investment in child care access for young children and college students

## Building workforce data systems and tools to meet evolving employment needs

- Develop racial and economic equity-oriented data indicators in workforce program evaluation and redesign
- Make an historic investment in regional and local cross-sector data partnerships that align education programs and workforce opportunities