

Policy Platform

April 2024

Introduction

The New Hampshire Center for Justice and Equity (NHCJE) organizes its work across four pillars:

Community Building & Organizing. NHCJE *convenes and connects* key stakeholders, institutional partners, and municipal and state government to facilitate the movement of ideas into action.

Public Policy. NHCJE *informs and educates* through the dissemination of information and the development of policy solutions.

Institutional Capacity Building. NHCJE *strengthens and supports* partners by providing training and technical assistance to help grow the capacity of the network of justice and equity-focused organizations and efforts across the state.

Operating Supports & Intentional Investments. NHCJE *builds and bolsters*, seeking to strengthen communities by distributing resources for programs and initiatives.

We also organize in content areas defined by six sectors of effort: **Civic Engagement, Economic Development, Education, Government, Health, and Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice.**

This Policy Platform further defines the foci for our Public Policy work, providing direction for the issues that we will focus on in our “Inform and Educate” efforts. In addition, making progress on these issues in NH will require work across the other pillars, such as convening stakeholders for difficult discussions (“Community Building and Organizing” pillar) and supporting partners working on these issues (“Institutional Capacity Building” pillar). We understand that successful policy change requires collaboration and cooperation, and we will lead when we need to and offer our support when that is the best approach. While recognizing the interconnectedness of these issues, we organize these policy priorities by sector, understanding the interdependencies and intersections across sectors.



Civic Engagement

Policy happens for people who participate, so NHCJE will focus on efforts to **STRENGTHEN VOTING RIGHTS**.

The Priorities are...

...Because

Automatic voter registration

The 2022 midterms showed the largest disparity in election participation between White voters and voters of color since 2006, in every state but Hawaii.¹ Making it as easy as possible to register to vote is important to counteract efforts to restrict voter eligibility, limit majority-minority voting districts,² and dismantle protections of the Voting Rights Act.³ In addition, the cost burden for voting, including taking time off of work during polling hours, is felt more by communities of color.⁴

No-excuse mail-in ballot option

Increased access to mail-in ballots works to increase election participation, evidenced by record-breaking voter participation during the 2020 cycle.⁵

Making voting accessible

In NH, about 8% of the population speaks a language other than English at home, but there are no requirements that voter registration and other election materials are available in languages other than English.⁶ In addition, voting can be difficult for people with disabilities, and many places do not employ technologies to allow full participation in the voting process.⁷

¹ Morris, K., and Grange, C. (2024, 2 March). Growing racial disparities in voter turnout, 2008-2022. Brennan Center for Justice. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/growing-racial-disparities-voter-turnout-2008-2022>.

² Lacy, A. (2022, 27 January). New Hampshire Republicans are throwing voting restrictions at the wall and seeing what sticks. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2022/01/27/new-hampshire-voter-suppression-laws/>.

³ *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/court-cases/shelby-county-v-holder>. See also, *Brnovich v. DNC*, 594 U.S. ____ (2021), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/court-cases/brnovich-v-democratic-national-committee>.

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10480081/>

⁵ McDermott, C. (2021, 17 February). N.H. notches record voter turnout in 2020, boosted in large part by absentee ballots. *NHPR*. <https://www.nhpr.org/post/absentee-voting-drove-record-turnout-2020-its-future-nh-still-debate>.

⁶ *RSA 652:22* prescribes that the manual governing general elections “shall be written in nontechnical language,” but makes no other recommendations or requirements regarding *which language(s)* in which to print the manual.

⁷ <https://drcnh.org/coalition-of-blind-and-vision-impaired-voters/>



Economic Development

An inclusive economy is one in which all people can thrive regardless of race or ethnicity, so NHCJE will focus on efforts to **CLOSE THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP**.

The Priorities are...

...Because

Affordable housing policy

Home ownership is one of the most common ways to build generational wealth. In NH, home ownership rates are 29% among Black people and 39.9% among Hispanic people, compared to 73.5% among White people.⁸

Livable minimum wage laws

NH's minimum wage is \$7.25/hour, making it the only New England state below \$13.67/hour.⁹ According to the MIT Living Wage Calculator, a single person with no children (the category with the lowest living wage) needs to make \$23.58 in NH.¹⁰ This is acutely felt by communities of color who, compared to White populations, make \$0.70-\$0.80 for each \$1.00.¹¹

Expand access to affordable, high-quality childcare

Many families are unable to find affordable childcare options.¹² The average annual price of center-based infant care was over \$15,000 in 2022.¹³ Affordability issues are starker among low-income households, which are disproportionately communities of color.¹⁴

Protecting employers' abilities to promote DEI in the workplace

Having a diverse workforce has been shown to improve profitability, efficiency, and innovation.¹⁵ Despite that, there are many threats to employers who want to focus on DEI efforts.¹⁶

⁸ United States Census. (2023). Tenure by race of householder (New Hampshire). Decennial Census, Table H10. <https://data.census.gov/table?g=040XX00US33&d=DEC%20Demographic%20and%20Housing%20Characteristics>.

⁹ United States Department of Labor. (2024). State minimum wage laws. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/minimum-wage/state>.

¹⁰ Living Wage Calculator. (2024). Living wage calculation for New Hampshire. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/33>.

¹¹ United States Department of Labor. (2020). Earnings disparities by race and ethnicity. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ofccp/about/data/earnings/race-and-ethnicity>.

¹² Carson, J., and Boege, S. (2023). New Hampshire parents use child care but seek more options. UNH Carsey School of Public Policy, <https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1461&context=carsey>.

¹³ New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute. (2023, October 16). Child care in New Hampshire: high price, low supply. <https://nhfpi.org/assets/2023/10/Fact-Sheet-Child-Care-in-New-Hampshire-High-Price-Low-Supply-10.16.23.pdf>.

¹⁴ Koltai, J., et al. (2021). Childcare remains out of reach for millions in 2021, leading to disproportionate job losses for Black, Hispanic, and low-income families. UNH Carsey School of Public Policy, <https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1444&context=carsey>.

¹⁵ McKinsey & Company. (2020, May). Diversity wins: how inclusion matters. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/diversity%20wins%20how%20inclusion%20matters/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters-vf.pdf>.

¹⁶ Olson, A, et al. (2024, January 14). As diversity, equity and inclusion comes under legal attack, companies quietly alter their programs. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/dei-diversity-corporations-affirmative-action-309864f08e6ec63a45d18ca5f25d7540>.



Education

Equity in public education means all voices can be heard, all perspectives can be shared, and all abilities can be met, so NHCJE will focus on efforts to **FOSTER BELONGING IN EDUCATION**.

The Priorities are...

Defending diversity in education

Inclusive pedagogy and curriculum development

...Because

A strong public education ensures that everyone feels safe and welcome. Schools can focus on this in many ways, including by ensuring that anti-discrimination rules are enforced and by hiring diverse faculty and staff. Students of color have better educational outcomes when they have teachers from a similar racial background.¹⁷ While over 10% of the state’s population come from communities of color,¹⁸ NH’s educator workforce is 98% White.¹⁹

Some educators are uncomfortable teaching content that addresses justice or equity issues,²⁰ and many feel legally limited due to the state’s “divisive concepts” classroom censorship law.²¹ It is important to protect a teacher’s ability to teach a true history of the state and nation.

¹⁷ Bennett, J. A. (2023, August). “The Belonging Case for Diversity.” New Hampshire Center for Justice & Equity, <https://nhcje.org/blog/new-focused-review-of-literature-highlights-importance-of-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-justice-in-public-education-in-nh>.

¹⁸ NHCJE. (2023, January). Demographic profiles of New Hampshire: A focus on race and ethnicity. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/631250318225492f20231654/t/63d1994999c0a95f9c1e81d5/1674680650150/NHCJE_DemographicsSummary_Jan2023.pdf.

¹⁹ Gibson, S. (2022, June 22). How New England’s lack of teacher diversity is affecting students at NH’s largest school district. *New Hampshire Public Radio*. <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2022-06-22/manchester-nh-student-teacher-diversity-enrollment-demographics>.

²⁰ Silva, B, et al. (2021). Justice through Practice: Inquiry on the Development of Preservice Teachers’ Teaching for Social Justice. *Journal of Practitioner Research* (6)2, article 4. (The pre-service teachers in this NH-based study were “mostly white women” who were “likely to go on to teach in schools attended by mostly white students.”)

²¹ Reaching Higher New Hampshire and Women Educators Leading Learning. (2023, April). What impacts the educator workforce? <https://reachinghighernh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/What-Impacts-the-Educator-Workforce-Results-from-the-New-Hampshire-School-Staff-Educator-Transition-Survey.pdf>.



Government

The effects of government decision-making can impact communities for generations, so NHCJE will focus on efforts to **REALIZE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY IN INFRASTRUCTURE.**

The Priorities are...

Reducing the energy burden

Reducing environmental burden and vulnerability

Equitable transportation development

...Because

Access to efficient and clean energy is important for economic, health, and environmental reasons. Families who do not own their own home, who are more often from communities of color, often cannot take advantage of opportunities to modify energy choices and realize these benefits.

Harms resulting from the location of industrial sites like asphalt plants²² disproportionately impact communities of color, who endure higher incidences of negative health outcomes tied to the warming environment²³ and the toxins in it.²⁴

99% of NH workers over 16 years of age commute to work by car or truck,²⁵ in part because there are few options for reliable public transportation. Those using public transportation in NH spend 115% more-time commuting. People of color are twice as likely as White people to rely on public transportation.²⁶ Reducing the costs for transportation by making NH less car-dependent can allow for more economic opportunity, widening the areas and types of employment available.

²² Hoplamazian, M. and Lozada, G. (2023, September 26). Nashua rejected a proposed asphalt plant. But the company's applying for a permit with the state. *New Hampshire Public Radio*. <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2023-09-26/nashua-rejected-a-proposed-asphalt-plant-but-the-companys-applying-for-a-permit-with-the-state>.

²³ Ragsdale, K., et al. (2021, August 17). The Burdens of Heat. *Granite State News Collaborative*. <https://www.collaborativenh.org/environmental-justice-stories/2021/8/17/the-burdens-of-heat>.

²⁴ Ragsdale, K., et al. (2021, December 13). Mapping lead contamination in the Granite State. *Granite State News Collaborative*. <https://www.collaborativenh.org/environmental-justice-stories/2021/12/15/mapping-lead-contamination-in-the-granite-state>.

²⁵ American Community Survey. (2022). Table S0802, Means of transportation to work by selected characteristics.

²⁶ White House. (2021, August). The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will deliver for New Hampshire. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NEW-HAMPSHIRE-Infrastructure-Investment-and-Jobs-Act-State-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.



Health

Communities of color have disproportionate negative health outcomes, so NHCJE will focus on efforts to ***ELIMINATE RACIAL HEALTH DISPARITIES***.

The Priorities are...

...Because

Expanded Medicaid coverage

Having health insurance coverage reduces morbidity and mortality. Medicaid is a critical type of health insurance for thousands of people in NH and is particularly important for communities of color.^{27,28} Protecting Medicaid coverage is critical for financial stability and wellness.

Increased workforce capacity to serve diverse communities

The current healthcare workforce in NH is insufficient to meet the current and anticipated needs of the community.²⁹ An emphasis on cultural competence is necessary to ensure appropriate care for an increasingly diverse population in NH.

Addressing health care costs and affordability

Almost 40% of working-age adults report skipping medical care or prescription drugs due to cost.³⁰ The inability to get care due to cost is particularly difficult for lower-income families, many of whom are from our communities of color.

²⁷ Kaiser Family Foundation. (2023, June). Medicaid in New Hampshire. <https://files.kff.org/attachment/fact-sheet-medicaid-state-nh>.

²⁸ New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute. (2023, January 17). The effects of Medicaid expansion in New Hampshire. <https://nhfpi.org/assets/2023/01/Issue-Brief-The-Effects-of-Medicaid-Expansion-in-New-Hampshire-1.17.23-1.pdf>.

²⁹ Healthforce NH. (2022, March). Giving care: a strategic plan to expand and support New Hampshire's health care workforce. <https://healthforcenh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NH-Workforce-Strategies-Report.pdf>

³⁰ Collins, S. R., et al. (2023, October). Paying for It: How Health Care Costs and Medical Debt Are Making Americans Sicker and Poorer — Findings from the Commonwealth Fund 2023 Health Care Affordability Survey. <https://doi.org/10.26099/bf08-3735>



Law Enforcement / Criminal Justice

Racial disparity in the criminal justice system is well documented in the United States, and New Hampshire mirrors many of those issues. To improve this, NHCJE will focus on **ADDRESSING THE DISPARATE IMPACTS OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND LEGAL SYSTEMS.**

The Priorities are...

Improved racial data collection in justice system data

Bail reform

Expungement tied to cannabis legalization

...Because

Publicly available data for the state's incarcerated populations are sparse on racial demographics.³¹ Furthermore, efforts to include racial data on state-issued identification have fallen short.³² Without these data, it is difficult to identify problems and implement solutions.

Bail reform has been important to ensure equity for populations with varying abilities to afford bail amounts for similar charges. NH's bail reforms have had positive outcomes.³³ Ensuring that these reforms are not rescinded is important.³⁴

People of color are overrepresented among NH arrestees for possession of marijuana, despite similar rates of usage across racial groups.³⁵ Efforts toward legalization of marijuana³⁶ include expungement of some criminal records, which can help address this disparity.³⁷

³¹ NHCJE. (TBD). Demographic profiles of New Hampshire: A focus on incarceration.

³² LaCasse, A. (2021, March 22). NH police reform bill passes Senate without racial data gathering provisions. *Seacoast Online*. <https://www.seacoastonline.com/story/news/state/2021/03/22/nh-police-reform-passes-senate-without-race-data-collection-provisions/4765098001/>.

³³ <https://law.unh.edu/blog/2023/03/legal-impact-new-hampshire-bail-reform-laws-data>

³⁴ DeWitt, E. (2023, November 15). House committee unveils new bail reform proposal, after clash with Senate. <https://newhampshirebulletin.com/2023/11/15/house-committee-unveils-new-bail-reform-proposal-after-clash-with-senate/>.

³⁵ American Civil Liberties Union – New Hampshire. (2020, April 20). The Impact of the War on Drugs and Bail in New Hampshire. <https://www.aclu-nh.org/en/press-releases/aclu-nh-releases-report-detailing-staggering-impact-marijuana-laws-nh>.

³⁶ Docket for HB544-FN, legalizing cannabis for retail sale, New Hampshire House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee, https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_Status/billinfo.aspx?id=70.

³⁷ Docket for HB1539-FN, relative to annulling, resentencing, or discontinuing prosecution of certain cannabis offenses, New Hampshire House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_Status/billinfo.aspx?id=1619&inflect=2.