



CITYHEALTH

# Executive Summary Report

## BACKGROUND

CityHealth, a project of the de Beaumont Foundation, starts with ‘city’ for a reason. First, we know that where and how we live has everything to do with our health—from our communities’ safety to the quality of our schools. Meanwhile cities, whose governments are closest to their communities, are uniquely positioned to match innovative solutions to local priorities and needs.

That’s why in 2017, CityHealth launched a new tool for city leaders to use policy as a lever to improve residents’ lives and help their cities thrive. We started with two core beliefs: first, that everyone, in every city, deserves the chance to live the healthiest possible life; and next, that policy is one of the most important tools local governments can use to improve their residents’ lives.

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*"A healthy city measures itself not only by life expectancy, but by access to nutritious food and park space, by traffic policies that reduce serious accidents, by child care affordability for working parents, and by the beauty of its neighborhoods. [The CityHealth] assessment of L.A., as one of America’s healthiest big cities, speaks to the effectiveness of our work."*

Eric Garcetti, Mayor, Los Angeles

CityHealth's first-ever ratings of the nation's 40 largest cities were the culmination of a two-year assessment of how they stacked up across policies shown to improve people's health and quality of life. Our analysis included nine policy recommendations:



#### **PAID SICK LEAVE**

Paid sick leave policies reduce the spread of contagious illnesses, increase employment and income stability, and save cities money in health care costs.



#### **ALCOHOL SALES CONTROL**

Policies that address a high density of alcohol outlets can reduce crime, increase safety and reduce spending on health care and criminal justice costs.



#### **HIGH-QUALITY, UNIVERSAL PRE-K**

High-quality pre-k improves children's school readiness and success—especially among low-income and at-risk populations. Long-term benefits include higher high-school graduation rates, lower rates of crime and teen pregnancy, higher lifetime earnings, and better health outcomes.



#### **TOBACCO 21**

Policies that raise the minimum legal age for the sale of tobacco to 21 reduce the number of young people using these products, which greatly reduces their risk for addiction and disease.



#### **CLEAN INDOOR AIR**

These policies protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of tobacco – which is the largest preventable cause of death – and reduce smokers' consumption of tobacco at the same time.



#### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING/ INCLUSIONARY ZONING**

Inclusionary zoning (IZ) is an affordable housing policy tool that requires developers to set aside a portion of housing units for low- and moderate-income residents. Affordable housing promotes diverse, inclusive neighborhoods and positive mental health, reduces crowding and exposure to environmental hazards, and frees up resources to pay for health care and healthy food.



#### **FOOD SAFETY/RESTAURANT GRADING**

Policies that require food establishments to publicly post food safety inspection grades empower consumers, reduce foodborne illness, and save on health care costs.



#### **COMPLETE STREETS**

Complete streets policies harmonize safety with the needs of all forms of transportation from walking, to biking, driving or taking the bus. These policies expand economic growth, improve individuals' health, and can save lives.



#### **HEALTHY FOOD PROCUREMENT**

Policies that ensure food sold and served in city buildings meets basic nutritional standards can provide more residents with affordable and healthy food choices and reduce some of the high medical costs associated with obesity.

Of course, big cities in the US face many pressing issues, and are pioneering many innovations in response. The CityHealth package is not intended to be an exhaustive list; instead, we selected nine policies that met our specific criteria of: 1) being largely under city jurisdiction, 2) backed by evidence, and 3) showing a track record of bipartisan support. We also looked for pragmatic ideas that are both ripe for widespread adoption and have real, tangible effects on people's health and well-being.

CityHealth's 40-city assessment combined innovative legal analysis with the input of national experts to determine the "gold standard" for each policy. Based on the laws on the books today, we identified which elements are necessary for the best quality policy (gold), a good quality policy (silver), and a passable quality policy (bronze). Cities with no policy received no medal, although the analysis notes instances where municipalities are preempted from passing policies by state law.

We then analyzed the cities' total performance and awarded overall medals accordingly:

- **Gold:** the city obtains five or more gold medals across the nine policies.
- **Silver:** the city obtains five or more gold/silver medals across the nine policies.
- **Bronze:** the city obtains four or more gold/silver/bronze medals across the nine policies.

## KEY FINDINGS: OVERALL CITY MEDALS

How did big cities across the US fare in the CityHealth assessment? Some are making great strides on these policies, while others have work to do. Few received overall gold medals, which shows a clear opportunity for cities to improve residents' health and quality of life. New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston and Washington, D.C. were the only cities to receive an overall gold; five cities received silver; nine received bronze; and 21 did not have enough strong policies to warrant a medal.

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*"This study showcases our work toward creating a healthy city for all Boston residents, and also identifies other cities that are leading in each policy area, creating opportunity for collaboration and learning from one another."*

Monica Valdes Lupi, Executive Director, Boston Public Health Commission



GOLD



SILVER



BRONZE

Out of the nation's  
40 largest cities

Looking at it a different way, CityHealth had 360 individual medals to award: nine policy medals in each of the 40 cities were assessed. Cities earned 182 of those in total, with each city receiving at least one policy medal. However, our national medal grid (see p. 7) shows how many gaps remain. For CityHealth, these 178 unearned medals represent a range of opportunities for cities to use policy as a lever to change the odds for people's quality of life and well-being, and to help their communities thrive.

## KEY FINDINGS: CITIES' POLICY MEDALS

CityHealth's ratings reveal an opportunity for city to help residents live healthier lives, and make their cities the best places to live, work and do business. With our scoring criteria, city leaders can better understand the core components of strong policies.

### PAID SICK LEAVE LAWS

CityHealth found the quality of cities' paid sick days policies is linked to how many family members and what size employer are covered by the law, as well as the number of hours of paid leave people can earn.



**Seventeen** out of 40 cities received a medal for paid sick leave laws.

### HIGH-QUALITY PRE-KINDERGARTEN

In partnership with the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), CityHealth assessed the availability of high-quality pre-k in big cities against ten research-based benchmarks based on the minimums for highly effective programs. CityHealth's medals applied these benchmarks, along with an assessment of the level of enrollment in the city's largest pre-k program.



**Thirty-one** out of 40 cities received a medal for high-quality pre-k.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING/INCLUSIONARY ZONING

CityHealth's assessment the quality of IZ policies centers on the size of developments covered by the law, what percentage of units must be made affordable, and whether the program is evaluated for effectiveness.



**Twelve** out of 40 cities received a medal for inclusionary zoning policies.

### COMPLETE STREETS

Our medal criteria for cities' complete streets policies are based on whether they are require compliance, explicitly accommodate all ages, abilities, and modes of transportation, and whether the city assigns an agency to oversee implementation.



**Thirty-one** out of 40 cities received a medal for complete streets policies.

### ALCOHOL SALES CONTROL

Controlling alcohol sales can be an effective means to improve public safety, yet not all cities have the authority to do so. For those who do, we awarded medals based on those who followed best practices according to legal experts.



**Fourteen** out of 40 cities received a medal for alcohol sales control policies.

### TOBACCO 21

While not all cities have the legal authority to control the purchasing age for tobacco, we awarded a gold medal to those who have taken action to raise it to 21.



**Thirteen** out of 40 cities received a gold medal for their Tobacco 21 policies.

### CLEAN INDOOR AIR POLICIES

For these laws, the strongest policies ban indoor use of tobacco products in the most locations—such as workplaces and public places—while providing no exemptions for places like bars, restaurants, or other facilities.



**Thirty-six** out of 40 cities received a medal for clean indoor air policies.

### FOOD SAFETY/RESTAURANT INSPECTION RATINGS

CityHealth found that strong policies in this area include routine inspections of food establishments, assign a rating, and require ratings be publicly posted outside the facility.



**Twelve** out of forty cities received a medal for restaurant inspection ratings policies.

### HEALTHY FOOD PROCUREMENT

Cities with strong healthy food procurement policies set and apply nutrition standards to all foods served and sold on city property.



**Fifteen** out of 40 cities received a medal for their healthy food procurement.

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*When city policies improve residents' health and quality of life, our community flourishes and our economy thrives. I'm proud to have worked with CityHealth to bring a business perspective to their set of policy recommendations. While not every CityHealth policy is a priority of our Chamber, we're thrilled with Kansas City's recognition for high-quality pre-K efforts, smoke-free indoor air, and our Tobacco 21 efforts to limit youth access to tobacco products. We know these steps are core to making our city a great place to live."*

Scott Hall, Senior Vice President for Civic and Community Initiatives,  
Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce



## NEXT STEPS

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CityHealth's goal is that all city leaders will use this as a tool to work together with individuals, community groups and businesses to make healthy choices, create strong communities and move toward the gold standard for each policy. CityHealth also believes that the data give residents a way to hold their elected officials accountable for taking the steps necessary to make their city thrive.

We invite inquiries from city officials, community leaders, and others interested in advancing policies to make their communities more vibrant, prosperous places to live. CityHealth will update its ratings again in three years. In the meantime, new resources from the de Beaumont Foundation will provide technical assistance and support to cities as they advance these policies, with the goal of creating healthier lives, stronger communities, and cities people are proud to call home.



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CityHealth presents its first ever ratings of how the nation’s 40 largest cities fare in policy areas that have a tremendous impact on people’s well-being and quality of life. See how your city stacked up:



|                | Clean Indoor Air | Paid Sick Day Policies | Tobacco 21 | Restaurant Grading | Complete Streets | Healthy Food Procurement | Inclusionary Zoning | Quality Pre-Kindergarten | Alcohol Sales Control | Overall |
|----------------|------------------|------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Albuquerque    |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Atlanta        |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Austin         |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Baltimore      |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Boston         |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Charlotte      |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Chicago        |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Columbus       |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Dallas         |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Denver         |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Detroit        |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| El Paso        |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Fort Worth     |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Fresno         |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Houston        |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Indianapolis   |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Jacksonville   |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Kansas, MO     |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Las Vegas      |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Long Beach     |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Los Angeles    |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Louisville     |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Memphis        |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Mesa           |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Milwaukee      |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Nashville      |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| New York       |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Oklahoma City  |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Philadelphia   |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Phoenix        |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Portland       |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Sacramento     |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| San Antonio    |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| San Diego      |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| San Francisco  |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| San Jose       |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Seattle        |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Tucson         |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Virginia Beach |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |
| Washington     |                  |                        |            |                    |                  |                          |                     |                          |                       |         |