

## Position Statement of the American Heart Association

### Introduction

Poverty is an important public health issue facing the United States; approximately 21 percent of children under 18 years (15 million) live in families with incomes below the federal poverty line.<sup>1</sup> Research demonstrates that, on average, families need an income at least twice the federal poverty level to cover basic expenses such as food, housing, and transportation.<sup>2</sup> Using this standard, close to 43 percent of children live in low-income families.<sup>3</sup>

The correlation between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) linked to poor negative health outcomes in adulthood is well established.<sup>4,5,6</sup> The American Heart Association (AHA) believes that the inextricable link between children's economic circumstances and health, policy investments promoting family financial health are imperative in mitigating the effects of childhood adversity. Numerous states have adopted policies such as minimum wage and sick leave or expanded antipoverty safety net programs to lessen the effects of low earnings and poor job quality on individuals and their families.<sup>7</sup> Several of these programs, particularly those that are important for children's health and well-being are discussed in this position paper.

### Background

ACEs are potentially traumatic events, either single, acute events or sustained over time, that have

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Studies have also demonstrated that long-term income instability (repeated changes in family income that are unpredictable or unintentional and that do not lead to improved economic circumstances) increases the likelihood of falling into poverty, which has detrimental effects on child development and later adult outcomes.

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\$15 minimum wage be in place by 2025 or earlier.<sup>35</sup> According to a recent report by the Congressional Budget Office, increasing minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2025 would raise the earnings of 17 million workers whose wages would be below \$15 per hour otherwise, helping to lift 1.3 million Americans out of poverty.<sup>36</sup> Available data derived from a recent literature review suggests minimum wage increases improve the following health outcomes: smoking; birthweight; and days with health limitations, including absence from work due to illness.<sup>37</sup> AHA supports efforts to raise the federal minimum wage to a level that will allow low-income families to sufficiently fund their basic needs, such as housing, food, and health care.

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), including the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), is a federal funding stream administered by states used to provide subsidies to low-income working families through certificates, grants, or contracts. States have substantial flexibility in establishing eligibility criteria, benefit levels,

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