

# The Health-Care Debt and Cost Crisis

The Roosevelt Institute has [focused deeply](#) on the ways in which rising costs—from fuel, to food, to housing—are pushing households toward a crisis point. Health care is frequently among those essentials whose increasing price burdens are tipping families into instability.

## Hidden Costs and Open Frustration

- Health coverage in the US can [leave many exposed](#): High premiums, large deductibles, and unpredictable copays shift cost and risk onto families, increasing financial strain.
- With increasing network restrictions, claim denials, and prior authorization requirements, it's no wonder that nearly [60 percent of Americans](#) report having had problems with their insurers over the past year.

## Medical Debt: The Financial Fallout from Coverage Gaps

- An estimated [41 percent of US adults](#) (~107 million people) carry some form of medical debt, which includes unpaid medical provider bills, credit card balances, bank loans, or debt to friends/family. About **24 percent** of adults have past-due medical debt.
- This crushing debt crowds out other essentials, like housing and groceries.
- When states expanded Medicaid, medical debt in collections dropped significantly. This shows that **public coverage**, like Medicaid and Affordable Care Act marketplace subsidies, is one of the most effective levers to prevent financial ruin from illness.

## What Can Be Done?

- **Ensure health coverage is affordable, protective, and accessible to all:** Cap premiums, deductibles, and cost sharing so families are shielded from unexpected expenses. Do not allow the planned elimination of subsidies for Affordable Care Act coverage. Go further by expanding public options for health care.
- **Reduce administrative burden and hidden cost traps:** Streamline processes like prior authorization, simplify claims, and limit denials.
- **Address medical debt head-on:** Expand debt forgiveness and protections, and prevent medical-related debt from harming credit scores.



### About The Roosevelt Institute

**The Roosevelt Institute** is a think tank, a student network, and the nonprofit partner to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum that, together, are learning from the past and working to redefine the future of the American economy. Focusing on corporate and public power, labor and wages, and the economics of race and gender inequality, the Roosevelt Institute unifies experts, invests in young leaders, and advances progressive policies that bring the legacy of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt into the 21st century.