

# Public health academics weigh in on their role in health policy advocacy

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A recently published paper in *SSM—Qualitative Research in Health* by CUNY SPH researchers explores how public health academics perceive their role in advocating for health policy change.

For the study, doctoral students Alexa D'Angelo and Erinn Bacchus, along with Associate Professor Emma Tsui conducted a grounded theory study, using in-depth interview data with public health academics about their perceived role in influencing [health policy](#), specifically in advocating for a single-payer health care system in the U.S.

The [respondents](#), including faculty from CUNY SPH, held varied perspectives regarding their role in influencing policy, with some more certain of their role than others. They suggested that providing evidence, crafting effective messaging, utilizing diverse media sources, working with activists, and teaching health care payment models were all roles that public health academics could play in pursuit of the single-payer system.

Participants noted that fear of engaging with politicized work, funding challenges and research gaps, and the perception that a single-payer system is unattainable in the U.S. undermined their willingness to engage in advocacy work toward that end. The authors interpret their findings within the larger historical context of health care reform and single payer advocacy.

"I think it's important to turn the lens on ourselves as the subject of inquiry," says D'Angelo. "To explore where we fit in [social movements](#), where the barriers to our participation are—and how we can better support advocacy efforts that work toward core public health goals. Based on our findings, we recommend that public [health](#) academics further explore and embrace their political role, while academic and professional institutions encourage [political participation](#) by altering incentives and providing space for political work and debate."

**More information:** Alexa B. D'Angelo et al, Advocating for a single-payer healthcare system: What is the role of public health academics?, *SSM—Qualitative Research in Health* (2022). [DOI:](#)

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