



Health Coalition
Aotearoa

2023 PREVENTION BRIEF

Better health. Fairer outcomes. Protected children.

THE PREVENTION PROMISE

Aotearoa New Zealand can be a place where all people thrive. It can be a place where good health is expected, where whānau wellbeing is precious and everyone can fully participate in society.

We all believe that families should be empowered to make decisions about their own wellbeing. This means creating healthy environments free from harmful substances and their marketing. It also means having equitable access to the determinants of good health across our whole lives.

Making healthy decisions isn't easy when the cost of healthy choices, like fruit and vegetables, is high - and rising fast. In the wake of Covid, greater income and food insecurity for low-income families has further exacerbated Aotearoa New Zealand's huge equity gaps. We can also no longer ignore that climate change threatens secure food and social systems for us all.

Health-harming industries (tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy food) exploit families and children during tough times through relentless, sophisticated marketing - and by swamping low-income suburbs with outlets for harmful products. It doesn't have to be this way.

Government can shift the balance of power away from health-harming industries and towards whānau. It can do this by better funding public health and community initiatives and introducing legislation that reduces the harm caused by tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food to society.

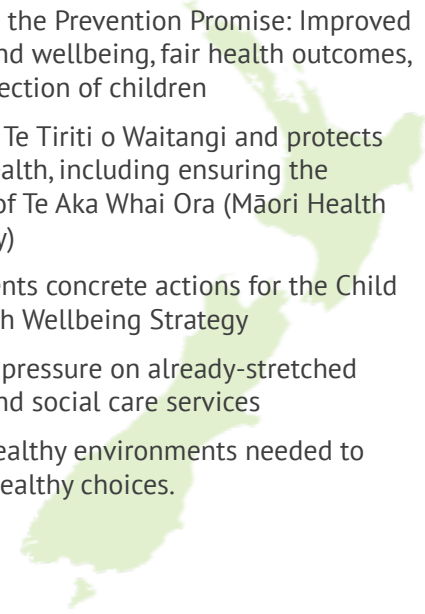
We implore the Government to put people's health before corporate profits by taking meaningful action against strong industry lobbying. Further, we call on the Government to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and commit to structural change that upholds and advances rangatiratanga and mana motuhake (self-determination) in our health system.

The **Prevention Promise** of strong public health systems and evidence-based policies will:

- Improve health and wellbeing across the whole population.
- Create fairer outcomes for Māori, Pacific, lower income households, people living with disability, and other disadvantaged groups.
- Protect children by ensuring that their environments are safer and healthier.

The specific actions outlined in this Prevention Brief 2023 will ensure the Government:

- Achieves the Prevention Promise: Improved health and wellbeing, fair health outcomes, and protection of children
- Honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and protects Māori health, including ensuring the success of Te Aka Whai Ora (Māori Health Authority)
- Implements concrete actions for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy
- Reduces pressure on already-stretched health and social care services
- Builds healthy environments needed to enable healthy choices.



This Prevention Brief 2023 has been prepared by the Health Coalition Aotearoa with input from its Expert Panels. The Coalition is an alliance of health and consumer NGOs, academics, professional associations, and individuals who are experienced in public health and passionate about the wellbeing of everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Brief outlines the priority actions needed to strengthen our public health systems and protect the health of our communities from harmful products.

THE STATE OF PREVENTION

Three commercially available products in Aotearoa cause almost one third of our healthy life-years lost every year.



Tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy food are responsible for the preventable loss of over 370,000 healthy life-years. That's almost one-third of the total preventable life-years lost in Aotearoa.1 In addition, alcohol contributes to major social damage by increasing the risk of family harm and other crimes.

Companies that profit from selling unhealthy products profoundly influence our health, often targeting working poor communities. They market their products aggressively and lobby hard against public health policies designed to promote health and protect people.

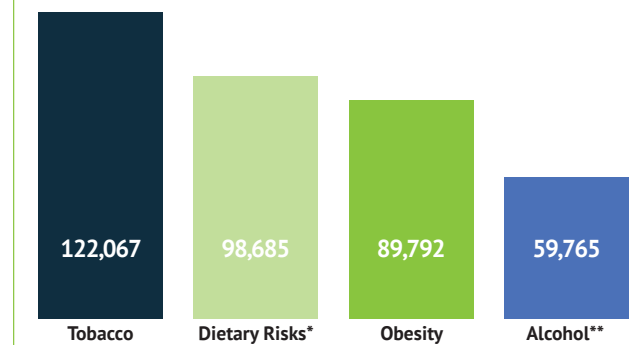
This playing field is neither level nor fair. It tips people, especially those experiencing multiple chronic stresses and structural inequity, towards an unhealthy life.

Aotearoa New Zealand has taken a world-leading position in tobacco control with new legislation to achieve SmokeFree 2025. Unfortunately, similar policy action for alcohol and unhealthy food lags far behind other countries. If the policies recommended by the World Health Organization and multiple New Zealand inquiries and reports were

implemented, our burden of disease and suffering would markedly reduce. These recommendations are evidence-based, cost-effective and pro-equity, yet successive governments have shied away from introducing them. At the same time that the Government made record investment in preventing infectious disease through our Covid-response, our regional public health teams were struggling to catch up in other important prevention areas,

A proactive, caring and confident Government would listen more to communities than to commercial lobbyists and implement the policy recommendations from WHO and public health experts. It makes more economic sense to invest in keeping people well than further burdening the health system to treat them when they are sick. The Government can level the playing field and give everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand the best chance of achieving their potential.

NUMBER OF HEALTHY LIFE-YEARS LOST



**Dietary risks are dietary patterns which are risks for non-communicable diseases.*

***This figure does not capture the wider whānau and social harms from alcohol.*

1. Institute for Health Metrics <http://www.healthdata.org/>. Healthy life-years lost are early preventable deaths, and the loss of health from the years lived with disabilities or limitations caused by diseases such as diabetes or cancer. Healthy life-years lost to alcohol excludes the reduced life expectancy of individuals with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This is significant given that prevalence is 2-3% and life expectancy is 34 years.



TOBACCO



World-leading tobacco control legislation passed in 2022 provides a powerful momentum to reach the Government's goal of Smokefree Aotearoa 2025.

Bold new amendments to The Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act (1990) will bring rapid declines in smoking as they are implemented. The measures include removing almost all nicotine from smoked tobacco, effectively making it non-addictive; reducing the number of retailers selling tobacco from over 6,000 to a maximum of 600; and creating a Smokefree Generation by making it illegal to sell tobacco to people born on or after 1 January 2009.

In the next few years smoking prevalence is projected to fall to minimal levels for all population groups. This will create short-term benefits such as lower health service costs and in the longer term, substantial impacts on smoking-related health inequities.

As outlined in our [open letter to the government on the Smokefree Action Plan 2025](#), we support the rollout of these game-changing new measures.

There is much to celebrate from the impact of over 30 years of effective tobacco control policy and legislation and smokefree activities, and now we have a real opportunity to build on this success and achieve the goal of under five percent smoking prevalence.

However, concerns remain. If we are to reach this goal, adequate resourcing of existing smokefree services will be essential, along with compliance monitoring and enforcement of the new Act.

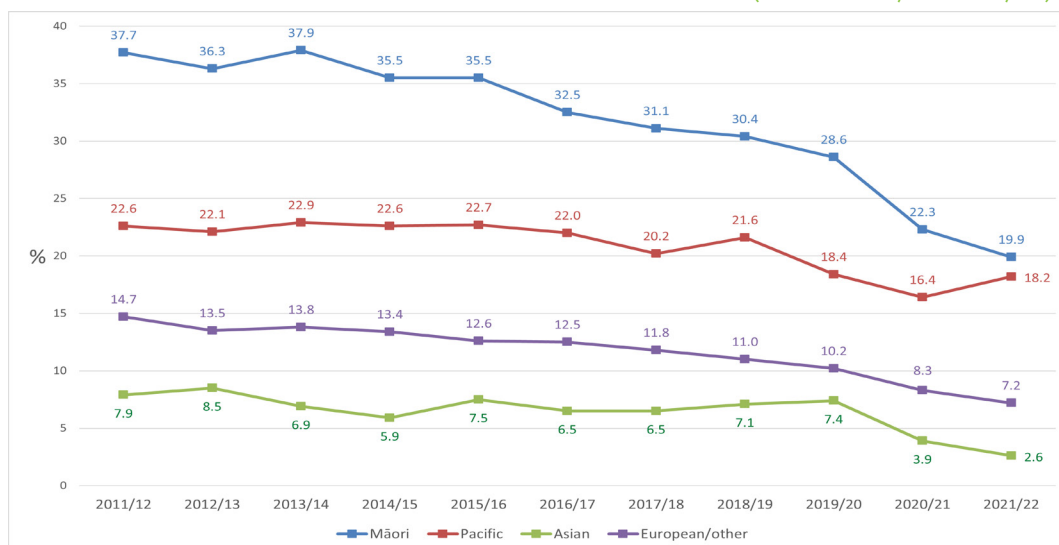
We are also concerned about our very high youth vaping rates, especially amongst rangatahi Māori. While we support access to e-cigarettes for those wanting to stop smoking, we are disappointed the current legislation does not include effective measures to protect young people from nicotine addiction, potential health problems, and the indirect harms of vaping on their learning and behaviour in schools.

Health Coalition Aotearoa supports calls from leading Māori tobacco control advocates and NGOs for a legislative review of the 2022 Act, to provide for stronger protections for young people from vaping industry marketing.

Top three policy priorities

1. Fully implement the key measures of the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act (1990), including monitoring and enforcement of the measures, and evaluation of their impact
2. Fully fund Māori-led initiatives to reduce smoking
3. Amend the 2022 legislation and regulations to ensure that rangatahi and young adults are better protected from vaping-related harms.

TRENDS IN DAILY SMOKING PREVALENCE BY ETHNICITY (NZHS 2011/12-2020/21)



ALCOHOL



We can create a society where alcohol causes minimal harm to people's physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing; where families and wider society are free from the destructive impact that alcohol has on their health, relationships, and life potential.

It is widely understood that alcohol has huge impacts on health, contributes to violence and suicide and causes lifelong brain damage to unborn children. The harms disproportionately affect young people, Māori and the most socio-economically deprived families, increasing inequities.

Despite the enormous strain on public services and communities, successive governments continue to value the commercial interests of the alcohol industry over our collective health. Alcohol has become progressively more affordable, marketing channels have expanded and local communities continue to have limited control over its availability.

After decades of inaction and multiple inquiries, the most effective solutions to alcohol harm have not been adopted. It is deeply disturbing that there is no plan to address the failure of alcohol law to provide the authority and equity guaranteed by the Crown to Māori in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

In 2022, we gave evidence to the Wai 2575 Waitangi Tribunal claim for the failure of the government to protect Māori from the brain damage caused by prenatal alcohol exposure and to meet the health and disability needs

of those living with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The government is yet to respond to this harm.

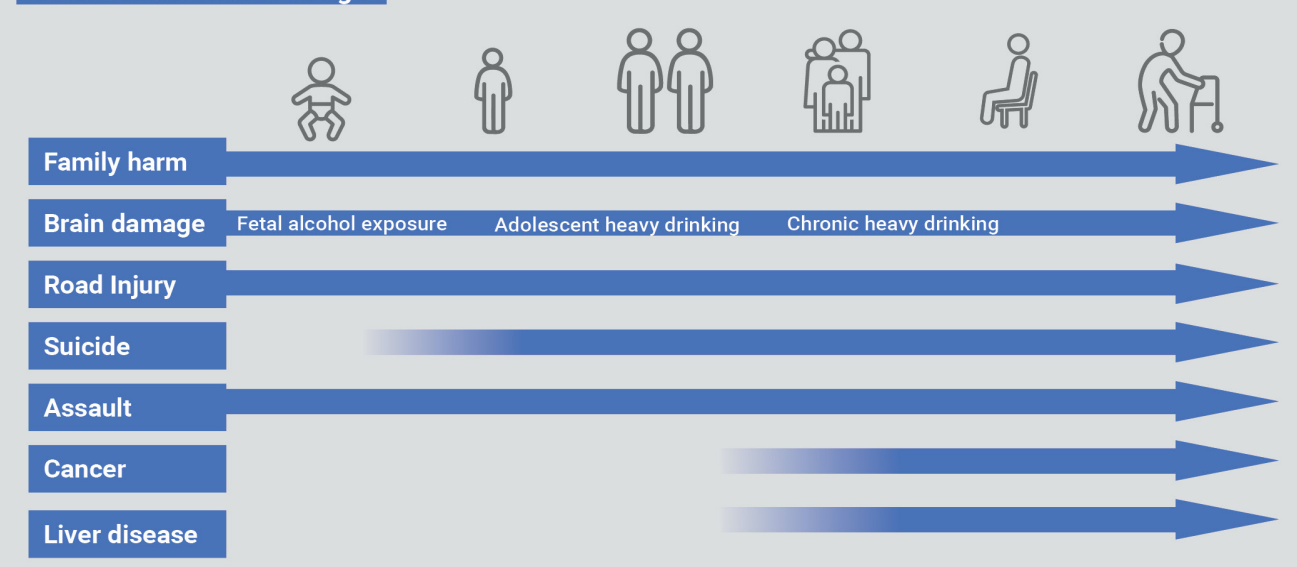
While we welcomed steps to remove industry appeals against local alcohol policies, the exclusion of Te Tiriti o Waitangi from alcohol law reform, and the deferral of work to restrict alcohol marketing and give communities a fair say in licensing decisions is deeply disappointing.

The Government has a vital responsibility to commit to a full reform of the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act, including giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi throughout the legislation and the policy process, and establishing comprehensive harm minimisation measures.

Top three policy priorities

1. Amend the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 to embed Te Tiriti o Waitangi, remove the Local Alcohol Policy appeals process, strengthen community control in licensing, and regulate online purchase and delivery
2. Increase alcohol taxes to reduce affordability of alcohol products
3. Ban all promotion (marketing) of alcohol products including in digital and print media, billboards, front facing retail outlets, branding of sports and cultural events, educational initiatives and charitable works.

Alcohol harm affects all ages



UNHEALTHY FOODS



Aotearoa could produce more than enough for all families to access affordable, culturally appropriate, healthy foods. We can be a country that puts the wellbeing of our children first by ensuring they have the right food to fuel their healthy growth and learning years.

Unfortunately, this is not the case, particularly for food-insecure whānau. Food companies, supermarkets and the fast-food industry are largely unregulated around marketing and the healthiness of the foods they produce. Combined with deepening wealth inequality, this is undermining the ability of whānau to provide healthy food for themselves and their children. There's a direct link between the lack of regulation and economic inequality, increasing obesity and widespread nutrition-related diseases, including dental caries.

Though the Government has publicly signaled interest in protecting children from exposure to junk food marketing, there's yet to be policy action.

There was overwhelming support from health and community organisations for proposed new regulations to ensure food and drinks provided by schools are healthy. Despite this, in 2023 the Labour Government only committed to further exploring this duty with a possible introduction in all schools by 2024.

As a fundamental matter for the health and education of our tamariki, the Government must listen to teachers, parents and community and health leaders, and implement regulations that ensure food provided by schools is healthy.

Our commissioned research (figure below) shows that in 2023 the price of healthy food was the number one cost of

living issue for whānau. The state of our children's health and the unaffordability of healthy kai shows why Aotearoa New Zealand desperately needs a national nutrition and food strategy to be in place by 2025. The strategy must lower the cost of healthy foods; make them more accessible to food-poor and insecure communities; protect access to healthy food from the impact of climate change; improve population nutrition and nutrition equity; and return food and land sovereignty to tangata whenua. This work needs to be jointly led by iwi and hapū and the Ministries of Health, Primary Industries, and Commerce, and Te Puni Kōkiri, with strong community involvement.

Finally, as the 2023 flooding in Tāmaki Makaurau and the Hawke's Bay shows, food is a core climate issue. We must secure the supply of healthy food for all of Aotearoa; food security going forward will be key as weather events disrupt producers here and overseas.

Top three policy priorities

1. Develop and implement a package of fiscal levers by 2025 as part of a wider strategy to reduce the absolute and relative cost of healthy food
2. Expand Ka Ora, Ka Ako to reach at least 50% of school children by 2025 and introduce a duty on schools and kura to provide only healthy food and drinks
3. Legislate to protect children from exposure to all forms of unhealthy food marketing in the places they learn, live and play.

PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE



The 2022, Pae Ora legislation was designed to transform our health system to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi and achieve health equity by addressing the underlying social determinants of health. This ambitious reform now needs to deliver on its promises by creating a world-class prevention system to promote and protect the health of everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Critically, our health system must influence policies beyond our hospital walls, by reducing the preventable harm from tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods.

Health Coalition Aotearoa is advocating for a public health system that reflects the needs of communities and the reality on the ground for health workers. But this will only be achieved if the new health agencies work collaboratively with non-government health organisations to support the same world-leading harm reduction approaches to alcohol and unhealthy foods as has been taken to tobacco.

Central to achieving the Pae Ora aspirations will be ensuring Te Aka Whai Ora can grow in strength and mana so that it can achieve its mandate of improving Māori health. Health professionals working in the public sector must also be supported in calling for evidence-based policy change.

In addition to policy action, public health needs a budget that matches the size of the problems it's tackling.

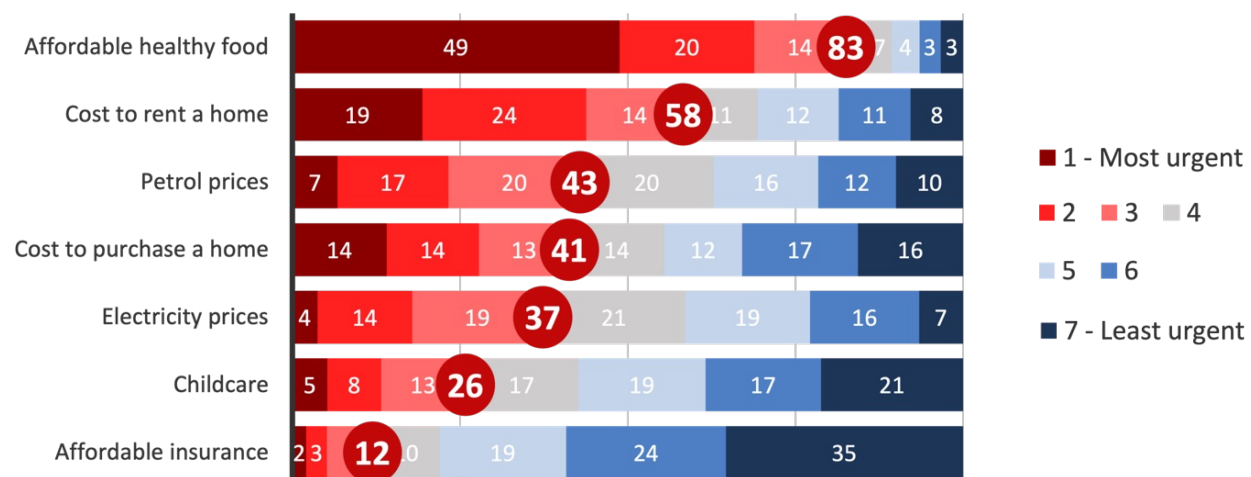
Tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods are responsible for over 30% of New Zealand's health burden. Yet the Government typically allocates less than 0.5% of the health budget to preventing the harm they cause.

The total investment in public health is usually only 2-3% of the health budget. We call on the Government to increase this to at least 5%. While the upfront costs of harm reduction interventions may seem steep, this approach is more cost effective than the status quo of treating growing numbers for preventable illness.

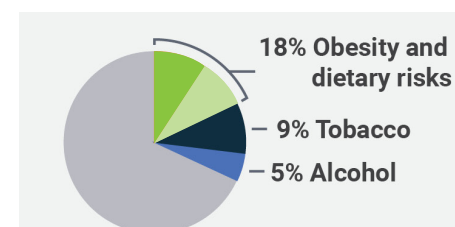
Top three policy priorities

1. Strengthen the management of commercial conflicts of interest and regulate lobbying through a) Legislation on lobbying, b) Policies and procedures on commercial conflicts of interest, and, c) Reform of the Official Information Act
2. Protect the right of public sector employees to publicly advocate for evidence-based policy change. This is important to protect the independent voice of health professionals, public health entities, and NGOs as a critical tool for improving the health system
3. Build a stronger public health ecosystem for health equity, especially through protecting the mana and mandate of Te Aka Whai Ora. Create closer collaborative links between government agencies and external organisations, including NGOs, academia and health unions to pool expertise, research and frontline experience.

NEW ZEALANDERS RATING THE MOST URGENT COST-OF-LIVING ISSUE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO FOCUS ON - 2023



Health Burden (% of disability-adjusted life years lost)



Government Investment in Public Health (and tobacco, alcohol & obesity prevention)



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT HEALTH COALITION AOTEAROA

Our mahi is only as strong as the communities and organisations that we work alongside. Here are ways that you can amplify our kaupapa and advocate for a healthier, more equitable Aotearoa New Zealand:

- Write to your MP and local councillors about how these products impact on you, your whānau, and local community.
- Identify opportunities for harm prevention in your community. Take the idea of junk-free and kid-safe zones free from harmful advertising to your local school board, to community leaders and health and neighbourhood organisations.
- Sign up as a member of Health Coalition Aotearoa, other public health groups or your health union and professional colleges to make your voice count. Share this brief and other HCA news and submissions with your colleagues and networks, and connect interested organisations.
- Share with HCA the work and new research you're doing on public health prevention and make it available to our expert panels - info@healthcoalition.org.nz
- Be a voice for public health in your community and in the media. If you are willing to speak out for health equity and prevention, drop a line to media@healthcoalition.org.nz

Health Coalition Aotearoa chooses not to be government funded so we can be an independent voice for the community. With the centralisation of health services, we are one of the few strong, evidence-based voices left for public health in Aotearoa.

This means we need your support to keep running effective events, publications, and campaigns that put health evidence and the needs of our communities before the interests of health-harming industries.

Here's how you can support:

Membership

You can sign up as an individual member, or get your organisation to sign up as an HCA member. Being a member allows you to attend member-only events, display an organisational logo on our website and yours, vote at our AGM, and most importantly connects you with other champions for health equity and public health.

Preventioners

Financial donors are our 'Preventioners' – the life-blood of our prevention effort. Without them, we could not operate to create healthier environments for current and future generations.

We especially welcome super-annuitants who are willing and financially able to donate some or all of their superannuation to the Health Coalition and become our Super-Preventioners. To learn more please email your contact details to b.swinburn@healthcoalition.org.nz to arrange a personal phone call.

Direct donations

Alternatively, you can make a one-off direct donation to: Kiwibank, Health Coalition Aotearoa Incorporated, 38- 9020- 0796051-00, ref 'donation'.

Visit our [donation page](#) for more information about becoming a preventioner or donor.



Health Coalition
Aotearoa





Health Coalition Aotearoa

Health Coalition Aotearoa envisions greater health and equity for Aotearoa New Zealand through reduced consumption of harmful products (tobacco, alcohol, unhealthy foods and beverages) and improved determinants of health.

We're an umbrella organisation for NGOs, health and consumer organisations, academic groups, and committed individuals, including community leaders and health professionals.

Through our staff, Board and four Expert Panels (Smokefree, Alcohol, Food Policy, and Public Health Infrastructure), we form scientific consensus on the best health policies based on evidence and international experience.

Our advocacy is always evidence-based, and dedicated to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi and striving for equity. That means pushing for structural change that advances rangatiratanga and mana motuhake in accordance with our Te Tiriti o Waitangi Framework.

We welcome all individuals and organisations to join us in the commitment to healthy, equitable and Tiriti- honouring future for Aotearoa.

Visit: www.healthcoalition.org.nz for more about our mahi.

Ngā mihi nui ki Hāpai Te Hauora ki tā rātou tautoko o tēnei kaupapa.

A special thanks to Hāpai Te Hauora for designing this Prevention Brief. Without your support this wouldn't be possible.

All members support the mission and goals of the Health Coalition Aotearoa but maintain their independent voice on the details of recommended actions.





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