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NEWS RELEASE

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New Effort Aims for National Conversation on Health Equity and Prosperity

ALEXANDRIA, VA – Social, economic and environmental factors drive inequities in health that have a devastating impact on communities, reducing the health potential for individuals, families and the nation as a whole. This lost health potential diminishes national prosperity and security, reducing the capacity of workers to create wealth and communities to flourish. The data shows that across America inequities leave babies without a healthy start to life, children on a track toward prison rather than college and adults getting sicker and dying younger than people just one ZIP code away. By investing in communities where poverty is concentrated in order to ensure that young people especially have what they need to thrive, all sectors can benefit from greater collective prosperity.

To help address the broad, systemic factors that support prosperity and in order to build a culture of health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has awarded a grant to the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) to connect leaders who want to advance health equity through meaningful systems change. IAF will spend the next year working with leaders from a range of sectors to initiate and sustain national dialogues on what it will take to make sure that everyone in America has an opportunity to live the healthiest life possible.

“Building a Culture of Health means ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to have what they need to be healthy. We need to directly engage leaders to be successful, and that’s why we’re working with the Institute for Alternative Futures to connect influencers from education, business, housing, and faith, among others, to co-create opportunities for better health. These forums allow for frank dialogue and seed a path forward for achieving health equity,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, president and CEO of RWJF.

As part of the effort Culture of Health effort, the “Health Equity and Prosperity project, which launched with an assembly at the historic Lincoln Cottage in Washington, D.C. on May 11, 2016. The Cottage is the site where President Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Act. The May assembly hosted leaders who articulated a vision to compel action across sectors with strategy to address the need to ensure that every child begins life well. This will be followed by a larger convening at the University of Maryland, College Park, on August 4-5, 2016, where hundreds of leaders from different sectors and communities will develop strategies for systems change and devise action plans for activating health equity networks in specific action areas, such as interrupting the incarceration rate, undoing neighborhood poverty concentrations and neutralizing racism.

The project is led by IAF's President and Senior Futurist Jonathan Peck. Based on what is learned through these convenings, IAF will develop and disseminate summary evaluation of methods for cross-sector engagement in order to share best practices and inspire others to take action to promote health equity.

"Health equity can place this nation on a pathway to prosperity by improving the education of our children, the vitality of our workforce and the coherence of our communities, while affirming both the individual's freedom to flourish and our collective commitment to justice" said Peck.

IAF's organizational partners in this project include the Samueli Institute, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Healthy Companies International, National Collaborative for Health Equity, AcademyHealth, Prevention Institute, Community Initiatives, Stanford Center for Population Health Sciences, University of Maryland Center for Health Equity and the Health Advocates in Reach and Research.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

The Institute for Alternative Futures is a nonprofit research and educational organization that helps communities and organizations more wisely understand and create the futures they prefer. Since 1977 IAF has been a pioneer in the use of futures methods, such as forecasts, scenarios, and vision, in health and health care, energy, transportation, education, and business. For more information, visit www.altfutures.org.

ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working with others to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](https://twitter.com/rwjf) or on Facebook at [www.rwjf.org/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/rwjf).