

Reviewer comment-2

This is an important topic to address as it relates to policy considerations that could potentially improve and promote more equitable health outcomes.

Significance section: This study focuses on the authority of states to influence population health through legislation, taxation, and regulation. It is important in that it emphasizes the how imperative it is to examine economic variables at the state level. By creating a composite Economic Index and comparing state rankings, it provides valuable insights for policymakers, professionals, and the public on the relationship between economics and health outcomes. Results section: The findings from this study are important to report; researchers found a strong correlation among state economic variables, with higher median household income linked to lower poverty and income inequality, and a composite Economic Index strongly associated with improved health outcomes such as lower mortality, higher life expectancy, and reduced infant mortality. This helps in comparing the top and bottom states as it reveals significant differences in both economic and health measures, with poorer economic status potentially accounting for over 460,000 excess deaths in the lowest-ranked states. Limitations/Conclusion: The focus of this study was on how state economic status, measured through a composite Economic Index, is associated with health outcomes. The intersectionality of economic policy, geography, race, and class are critical in shaping population health, with state-level comparisons offering unique insights into policy influence. Utilizing empirical methods to assess disparities was an important factor addressed in the study. Also, the authors pointedly support the importance of civic education in equipping individuals to advocate for improvements in both health and economic policy. Overall, the study reinforces that economic and social structures at the state level significantly impact health inequalities and outcomes.

A few of the references may be more dated (from the 1990s, e.g., Curtis, et al., 1998; Navarro, 1991) but most are up-to-date. Author references seminal works associated with the topic of health disparities and outcomes.