

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As Congress considers next steps to bolster the health of Americans in the face of a devastating pandemic, the 89 undersigned organizations urge you to include The Improving Social Determinants of Health Act of 2020 (H.R. 6561) in any further iterations of legislation to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how a community's resources directly impact the health of its residents. People at a disproportionate risk for serious health impacts from the novel coronavirus are also more likely to suffer secondary consequences, such as loss of income or health care, as a result of the pandemic. Now more than ever it is important to address the social and economic conditions, including housing, employment, food security, and education, that contribute significantly to an individual's health outcomes over their lifetime. These conditions, collectively referred to as the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), have rightfully been receiving increased attention from insurance companies, hospitals, healthcare systems, and governmental agencies interested in improving health outcomes and controlling costs even before the pandemic began.

Yet, while clinicians can identify non-medical social needs and make referrals to other organizations, they cannot ensure that there are adequate resources and policies in place to meet the needs of those referred. Public health departments are uniquely situated to build these collaborations across sectors, identify SDOH priorities in communities, and help address policies that inhibit health. For example, while the healthcare system can offer in-house social services assistance at a clinical site, a public health department can complement those efforts by convening community organizations and partners to promote clinic-to-community linkages, collecting data across health systems regarding SDOH needs, working to meet those needs at the local level so health systems can reduce costs, and developing community resource materials.

However, most local and state health departments lack funding and tools to support these cross-sector efforts and are limited in doing so by disease-specific federal funding. Given appropriate funding and technical assistance, more communities could engage in opportunities to address social determinants of health that contribute to high healthcare costs and preventable inequities in health outcomes. For this reason, we urge you to cosponsor H.R. 6561, which would create a CDC program to:

- Coordinate across CDC to ensure programs consider and incorporate SDOH in grants and activities;
- Award grants to state, local, territorial, and Tribal health agencies and organizations to address SDOHs in target communities;

- Award grants to nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education to conduct research on SDOH best practices; provide technical assistance, training and evaluation assistance to target community grantees; and disseminate best practices;
- Coordinate, support, and align SDOH activities with other agencies, such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and others; and
- Collect and analyze data related to SDOH activities.

During this devastating crisis we need to ensure that every community has the necessary access to the supports they require. The Improving Social Determinants of Health Act is one step to achieving that goal.

The full bill can be accessed [here](#). If you need additional information, please reach out to Joshua Izaak of Representative Nanette Diaz Barragán’s office at ext. 8220 or [Joshua.Izaak@mail.house.gov](mailto:Joshua.Izaak@mail.house.gov) or Daphne Delgado, TFAH Government Relations Senior Manager, at [ddelgado@tfah.org](mailto:ddelgado@tfah.org).

Sincerely,

**National Organizations:**

- American Art Therapy Association
- American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
- American Association of Birth Centers
- American Association on Health and Disability
- American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
- American Lung Association
- American Medical Student Association
- American Public Health Association
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America
- Association of Public Health Laboratories
- Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
- Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network
- Behavioral Health Association of Providers
- Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
- Common Threads
- Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
- Epilepsy Alliance America
- Families USA
- Farmworker Justice
- Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
- Health Leadership Legacy Project
- Hispanic Federation
- Justice in Aging
- Lakeshore Foundation
- Lutheran Services in America
- MomsRising

Move United  
NASTAD  
National Association of Certified Professional Midwives  
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
National Association of Community Health Workers  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
NERDS RULE INC  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
PFLAG National  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevent Cancer Foundation  
Prevention Institute  
Public Health Foundation  
RESULTS  
SLM Consulting, LLC  
Society for Community Research & Action (SCRA)  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Society for Public Health Education  
The Center for Community Resilience  
The Gerontological Society of America  
The Praxis Project  
Treatment Action Group  
Trust for America's Health  
Well Being Trust

**State and Local Organizations:**

All Youth Access, LLC  
Autism Family Services of New Jersey  
Berean Wellness & Community Support Center  
Bike Cleveland  
Brighter Beginnings  
Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus  
California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals  
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network  
Caregivers of New Jersey  
Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition (WA State)  
Commission on the Public's Health System  
Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC)  
Cook County Department of Public Health  
Epilepsy Services of New Jersey

Equality California  
Equality North Carolina  
flint rising  
Flint Women's Study Community Action Network  
Florida Institute for Health Innovation  
Health by Design  
Impetus - Let's Get Started LLC  
Indiana Public Health Association  
Lanai Community Health Center  
Maine Public Health Association  
MaryCatherine Jones Consulting, LLC  
New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials (NJACCHO)  
New Jersey Public Health Association  
RESULTS DC  
Silver State Equality-Nevada  
The Family Resource Network  
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health  
Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut