

May 18, 2020

Dear Members of Congress:

As Congress considers next steps to bolster the strength of the nation's public health infrastructure, the 72 undersigned organizations urge you to cosponsor The Improving Social Determinants of Health Act of 2020 (H.R. 6561).

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 far before the pandemic.

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 the 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, advocate for SDOH-related reimbursement and develop 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.
- Collect and analyze data related to SDOH activities.
- Authorize \$50 million annually for program activities.

The full bill can be accessed [here](#). If you would like to become an original cosponsor or need additional information, we encourage you to reach out to Joshua Izaak of Representative Barragán's office at [Joshua.Izaak@mail.house.gov](mailto:Joshua.Izaak@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

**National Organizations:**

All Youth Access, LLC  
American Association of Birth Centers  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Heart 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 and Territorial Health Officials  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
The Center for Community Resilience  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Common Threads  
Epilepsy Alliance America  
Families USA  
Farmworker Justice  
The Gerontological Society of America  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
Health Leadership Legacy Project  
Hispanic Federation  
Justice in Aging  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Lutheran Services in America  
MaryCatherine Jones Consulting, LLC  
MomsRising  
Move United  
NASTAD  
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  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
PFLAG National  
The Praxis Project  
Prevent Blindness

Prevent Cancer Foundation  
Prevention Institute  
RESULTS  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Society for Public Health Education  
Treatment Action Group  
Trust for America's Health

**Local Organizations:**

Autism Family Services of New Jersey  
Berean Wellness & Community Support Center  
Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus  
Caregivers of New Jersey  
Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition (WA State)  
Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children  
Cook County Department of Public Health  
Epilepsy Services of New Jersey  
Equality California  
Equality North Carolina  
The Family Resource Network  
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  
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health  
Maine Public Health Association  
New Jersey Association of County & City Health Officials  
New Jersey Public Health Association  
Public Health Foundation  
RESULTS DC  
Silver State Equality-Nevada  
SLM Consulting, LLC