### **Aligning for Health 2019 Accomplishments**

### Social Determinants Accelerator Act

In December 2018, we decided to revise our original plan to advocate for Healthcare Performance Partnership Pilots and came up with a proposal for the Social Determinants Accelerator Program.

The Social Determinant Accelerator Program would provide planning grants to states to establish Social Determinants Accelerator Plans - evidence-based, cross-sector and locally-driven plans to address social determinants for Medicaid populations. Additionally, the program would establish a federal inter-agency Council responsible for making the grants, providing targeted technical assistance and oversight, and evaluating the success of the program.

We spent the first half of the year formalizing our proposal, drafting legislative language, and meeting with offices in the House and Senate. With the support of our Advisory Board members, we had the opportunity to speak with a number of state and county officials to solicit their feedback on the proposed legislation and advice on gaining the support of their state congressional representatives.

Our collective efforts have paid off: Social Determinants Accelerator Act has successfully been introduced in both House and in the Senate.

#### H.R. 4004

* ***Introduction***
  + - Introduced July 25 by Reps. Bustos (D-IL), Cole (R-OK), McGovern (D-MA), and McMorris Rodgers (R-WA).
    - The bill currently has 22 bipartisan cosponsors and has been referred to the House Energy & Commerce Committee. We continue to work to add to the list of cosponsors, including through caucuses and task forces.
    - We held a [press conference](https://bustos.house.gov/photos-video-bustos-cole-mcgovern-mcmorris-rodgers-introduce-bipartisan-legislation-to-improve-health-outcomes/) on the Hill to mark the introduction of the bill. The event was a success. Reps. Bustos and McGovern were in attendance and spoke of their commitment to addressing social determinants. In addition, many of our members and Advisory Board members were in attendance, along with dozens of Hill staff, reporters and other organizations interested in social determinants.
    - The bill’s introduction was picked up by over a dozen news outlets, appearing in Politico, Modern Healthcare, Inside Health Policy, Forbes, and others.
    - Our sponsors are extremely motivated and have spoken about the bill during high profile events such as a bipartisan [HHS Rural Health Roundtable](%09Our%20sponsors%20are%20extremely%20motivated%20and%20have%20spoken%20about%20the%20bill%20during%20high%20profile%20events%20such%20as%20a%20bipartisan%20HHS%20Rural%20Health%20Roundable) (including a [letter](https://bustos.house.gov/bustos-delivers-key-rural-health-priorities-to-secretary-of-health-and-human-services/) to HHS Secretary Azar specifically calling attention to H.R. 4004), and a session on Health Equity in American during the [Atlantic Festival](https://bustos.house.gov/photos-bustos-discusses-health-care-bill-at-the-atlantic-festival/)
* ***Stakeholder Endorsements and Interest***
  + - H.R. 4004 has been endorsed by all of our members, almost all of our Advisory Board members, and other organizations ranging from Enterprise Community Partners, to City Year the Nonprofit Finance Fund, and Lutheran Services of America.
    - We are currently circulating another stakeholder sign-on letter with a larger set of organizations, which expresses support for the bill and requests a hearing in the Energy & Commerce Committee. Finally, we are also circulating a sign-on letter for Governors and state cabinet officials expressing support for the bill; several states have tentatively agreed to sign and the Western Governors’ Association also plans to official endorse the bill.
    - The bill been mentioned in several op-eds, blog posts, and articles in publications such as [Health Affairs](https://www.healthaffairs.org/do/10.1377/hblog20191025.776011/full/), the [Hill](https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/459849-social-determinants-of-health-health-care-isnt-just-bugs-and-bacteria), [Knowledge@Wharton](https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/social-determinants-of-health/), and others, and has been mentioned in events such as the Alliance for Health Policy’s [Congressional Briefing](http://www.allhealthpolicy.org/congressional-briefing-whats-next-on-social-determinants-of-health/) on social determinants of health.
* ***Ongoing Advocacy and Plans for Advancement***
  + As noted above, Rep. Bustos has already put in a request with the House Energy & Commerce Committee to hold a hearing on social determinants and to discuss H.R. 4004. To support their request, we are circulating a stakeholder sign-on letter expressing support for H.R. 4004 and urging the committee to hold a hearing on social determinants. We are hopeful that the Committee will hold a hearing to discuss the legislation, followed by a markup and approval of the legislation in 2020.
  + The House Ways & Means Committee, Rural and Underserved Communities Health Task Force released a request for information soliciting input as it works to develop bipartisan legislation to improve health care outcomes within underserved communities. We responded to the request for information, sharing information about the impact of social determinants on rural health outcomes and advocating for H.R. 4004.

#### S. 2986

* ***Introduction***
  + - Introduced December 5 by Sens. Young (R-IN) and Stabenow (D-MI) and was referred to the Senate Finance Committee.
    - Senators. [Young](https://www.young.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/young-stabenow-introduce-bipartisan-legislation-to-address-social-determinants-of-health-) and [Stabenow](https://www.stabenow.senate.gov/news/stabenow-young-introduce-bipartisan-legislation-to-address-social-determinants-of-health-) issued press releases. Aligning for Health also issued a statement.
* ***Ongoing Advocacy***
  + - We are in the process of meeting with Senate offices who were originally interested in the bill to add cosponsors.

### Other Social Determinants Legislation Introduced

* This year, two other significant pieces of social determinants legislation were introduced: the Utilizing National Data, Effectively Reforming Standards and Tools, to Address Negative Determinants of Health (UNDERSTAND) Act (S. 1323), which was introduced by Sens. Portman (R-OH) and Casey (D-PA); and the Collecting and Analyzing Resources Integral and Necessary for Guidance (CARING) for Social Determinants Act of 2019 (H.R. 4621), which was introduced by Reps. Blunt Rochester (D-DE) and Bilirakis (R-FL) and four other representatives. We have officially endorsed both pieces of legislation.
* Additionally, both [House](https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/FY2020%20LHHS_Report.pdf) and [Senate](http://bit.ly/2PfefC9) appropriators included in their Labor-HHS appropriations report language a paragraph emphasizing the importance of social determinants in driving health outcomes and healthcare costs, and encouraging CMS to clarify and disseminate the strategies that states can implement under current Medicaid and CHIP authority, or through waivers, to address social determinants of health.

### Ongoing Social Determinants Advocacy

* ***Represented Coalition at a range of Thought Leadership Events*** 
  + - JP Morgan Conference, “Doing Well by Doing Good: Evaluating the ROI of Investments in Social Determinants of Health”
    - Sorenson Impact, “Winter Innovation Summit,”
    - National Alliance to End Homelessness, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the University of Pennsylvania, “The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness”
    - Brooking Institution, “Braiding & Blending Funds to Promote Social Determinants of Health.”
    - Alliance for Health Policy, “What’s Next on Social Determinants of Health.”
    - Rise, “National Summit on Social Determinants of Health,”
    - Healthcare Leadership Council, Tivity Health, and Aetna, “Addressing Social Determinants of Health.”
    - Healthcare Leadership Council, “The Whole Patient and the Impact of Social Determinants of Health.”
    - NASHP, “Annual Conference.”
    - HHS, “Roundtable on Leveraging Data on the Social Determinants of Health.”
    - Population Health Alliance, “Innovation Summit and Capitol Caucus.”
    - National Association of Medicaid Directors, “NAMD 2019 Fall Conference.”
* ***Communications*** 
  + - **Website Refresh** – We completed a full update to our website in September, which improves the usability and navigability, and expands the information available on the website.
    - **Weekly Clips** – In September, we began sending out a biweekly roundup of articles, reports, events, and opportunities related to social determinants. We hope these will be a helpful resource for our members, advisory board member and others. Please let us know if there are others you would like to add to our list serve, or if there are particular events or opportunities you would like us to include.
    - **Twitter** – We have continued to grow our presence on twitter, increasing our following by over 100% and enhancing engagement substantially over the last year. We use twitter to share news articles, announcements, and other information related to social determinants.
* ***Quality***
  + - CMS is in the process of finalizing the Medicaid Quality Rating System (QRS), which will be similar to the Medicare Star Ratings. The QRS measures will be used to rate plan performance on a number of quality metrics. States will be responsible either for adopting the federal core quality measures or for establishing a set of substantially similar quality measures.
    - Aligning for Health convened a workgroup of members with interest in quality, and discussed whether there were any recommendations we would want to make to CMS, and their contractor, Mathematica, as they finalize plans for the QRS.
    - The Workgroup ultimately recommended that CMS consider adding to the QRS a process measure that assesses whether a plan has successfully performed a social needs screening at the point of enrollment. As we noted to CMS and Mathematica, 25 states already require plans to screen enrollees for social needs and six additional states plan to do so in 2020. Additionally, at least two states have already incorporated a quality measure into their plan quality performance programs assessing whether the plan has completed social needs screenings. We also recommended that CMS consider more broadly how social determinants impact health outcomes and quality of care.
    - We presented our recommendations to CMS and Mathematica in October for their consideration.