
March 5, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

Western Governors recognize that social determinants of health (SDOH) – conditions in the environments in which people live, learn, work, play, worship and age – have an enormous influence on individual health risks and outcomes. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services identifies five key areas of SDOH: economic stability; education; social and community context; health and health care; and neighborhood and built environment.

Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution 2020-05, *Physical and Behavioral Health Care in Western States*, expresses that:

Western Governors support efforts to identify risks facing high utilizers of health care services, including food insecurity, domestic violence risk, unmet transportation needs, housing, utility and other essential supports and services, and to develop innovative models designed to improve coordination of medical and non-medical services and use of evidence-based interventions. These models can provide valuable information on how meeting non-health needs and addressing other social determinants can improve overall health status and decrease health spending.

H.R. 4004, the Social Determinants Accelerator Act, is consistent with Western Governors' policy. The legislation would establish a Social Determinants Accelerator Interagency Council to foster, "effective, coordinated federal technical assistance to help states and local governments to improve outcomes and cost-effectiveness of, and return on investment from, health and social services programs." H.R. 4004 would also establish a grant program for states and local governments to develop social determinants accelerator plans. These plans would facilitate the implementation of locally-designed, cross-sector interventions and strategies to improve health and social outcomes, and provide important data on the cost-effectiveness and health outcomes of these innovative approaches. This, in turn, could inform the further adoption of new, inventive solutions to societal health care challenges and improve health outcomes.

The legislation also promotes the enlistment of state and local governments to identify opportunities for the federal government to improve the health and social outcomes of individuals enrolled in Medicaid. Western Governors welcome such efforts as an element of strengthening the state-federal relationship, especially in the case of Medicaid, a federal program which is administered and, in part, funded by the states.

The Honorable Frank Pallone

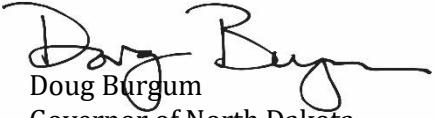
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Western Governors appreciate the Committee's leadership on health care policy and encourage your consideration of H.R. 4004 as a potential tool to help states and local governments consider and address SDOH. Do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance as you contemplate improvements to our nation's health care system.

Sincerely,


Doug Burgum
Governor of North Dakota
Chair, WGA


Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon
Vice Chair, WGA

cc: The Honorable Cheri Bustos
The Honorable Tom Cole