



Aligning for Health

2020 Year in Review

TO: Aligning for Health Members

FROM: Aligning for Health

DATE: December 9, 2020

RE: 2020 Year in Review

We thank you for your continued support, guidance, and participation over the past year. We are pleased to have achieved significant progress on the following 2020 objectives:

- Grow the influence of Aligning for Health among policymakers in light of dramatically elevated social needs and challenges post-COVID-19;
- Shape discussions in Washington around social determinants of health – ensuring bipartisan dialogue, and constructive policy development; and
- Advance policy ideas, including legislation and/or regulation that empowers health organizations to address both health and social needs.

Below, we provide an overview of our 2020 accomplishments. We separately outline our policy and advocacy objectives for 2021 in the 2021 Goals and Key Deliverables document.

Advocacy

Over the course of the past year, Aligning for Health has focused on supporting, advancing, and introducing social determinants legislation, including:

- **Social Determinants Accelerator Act**
 - o The Social Determinants Accelerator Act ([H.R. 4004/S. 2986](#)) is a bicameral, bipartisan bill introduced in 2019, that 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.
 - o While it appears unlikely to pass this December, SDAA has been the leading Congressional SDOH catalyst for dialogue and policymaking:
 - There are now 45 bipartisan cosponsors in the House and three cosponsors in the Senate;
 - Committee staff have been engaged on this and other opportunities to address social needs and health disparities,
 - We have cultivating over 80 [endorsing](#) organizations, including the Western Governors' Association; who have joined us in and drafting letters in response to Congressional requests advocating for consideration;
 - Successful advocacy has led to its inclusion in key health equity and other legislative packages, including:

- **House Appropriations, Labor-HHS-Education Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations [accompanying report language](#)**, which has been adopted by the House and is currently being negotiated with the Senate for inclusion in the final Conference Report.
 - **Health Equity and Accountability Act (HEAA) ([H.R. 6637/S. 4819](#))**, [introduced](#) by Rep. Garcia (D-IL) and 105 cosponsors, and endorsed by the Congressional Tri-Caucus. HEAA is a broad package of legislation intended to improve the health of minority individuals.
 - **Ending Health Disparities During COVID-19 Act of 2020 (EHDC) ([H.R. 8200](#))**, introduced by Rep. Kelly (D-IL) and 54 cosponsors. EHDC is a board package of legislation intended to improve the health of minority individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Leveraging Integrated Networks in Communities (LINC) to Address Social Needs Act**
 - LINC to Address Social Needs Act is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative proposal we have developed over the course of 2020 and are in the process of finalizing for introduction in early 2021. The legislation would provide \$200M in funding to state-designated entities to establish or enhance existing community referral and integration network models.
 - We expect the introduction of this significant, bipartisan, bicameral legislation in early 2021 to catalyze a new wave of dialogue around social need referral networks among health policy experts and policymakers. We have worked closely with sponsoring offices, Committees of Jurisdiction, and numerous stakeholders and state officials in developing the proposed legislation.
 - **Other Legislation**
 - AFH endorsed and/or liaised with offices advancing social determinants bills, including the **Improving Social Determinants of Health Act of 2020 ([H.R. 6561](#))**, the **Helping MOMS Act ([H.R. 4996](#))**, the **Maternal Health Quality Improvement Act ([H.R. 4995](#))**, the **Black Maternal Health Momnibus ([H.R. 6142](#))**, the **Assimilating Health and Equity Assessments into Decision Making Act (AHEAD Act) ([H.R. 7510](#))**, the **CARING Act ([H.R. 4621](#))**, and the **UNDERSTAND Act ([S. 1323](#))**, among others.

Aligning for Health has advocated broadly for the advancement of social determinants legislation, including by:

- Working with majority and minority Committee staff on advancing social determinants legislation and timing for holding an **Energy & Commerce legislative hearing** on social determinants.
- Conceptualizing, championing, and now implementing the launch of a bipartisan **Congressional Social Determinants of Health Caucus** in early 2021.
- **Informing Policymakers on Key Committees** on relevant SDOH opportunities in response to requests for information, including:
 - Senate Finance Committee, on [health disparities](#)

- Senate HELP Committee, on [preparing for the next pandemic](#)
- Senate Finance Committee, on [maternal health](#)
- House Ways & Means Committee Rural and Underserved Communities Health Task Force, on [health disparities](#).

Aligning for Health has maintained an ongoing dialogue with HHS, CMMI, and ACL on social determinants policy and has participated in several convenings and roundtables coordinated by the Administration, including on leveraging social determinants of health data and developing community integrated networks.

Policy Development

- **Aligning for Health convened a Task Force of Aligning for Health members** interested in further exploring and drafting a set of principles related to the incorporation of **social risk factors in risk adjustment** in Medicare and Medicaid. Aligning for Health compiled background materials and analysis, and held two convenings of the Task Force to develop a set of potential draft consensus principles. A white paper describing our findings and consensus principles is forthcoming.

Thought Leadership & Communications

- **Social Determinants Forum**
 - Aligning for Health held the first in a series of a series of Social Determinants Forums, which was focused on Health & Housing policy. Aligning for Health members and Advisory Board members shared their work in advancing collaborations intended to address housing needs, sharing examples of medical respite services, capital and investment projects, supportive housing solutions, and others. Aligning for Health intends to hold periodic Forums focused on high-priority social determinant issues, such as maternal health, social isolation, or food access.
- **Webinars**
 - Aligning for Health held several widely attended webinars this year, highlighting how Aligning for Health members have responded to social needs and sought to reduce health disparities during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they have leveraged value-based care to address social needs and advance health equity. Aligning for Health's final webinar of the year will be jointly hosted by Trust for America's Health, and will feature five leading Hill offices through the engagement of health staffers who will share their thoughts and insight on social determinants in the 117th Congress.
 - All of the webinars attracted significant participation from a wide cross-section of individuals from the Hill, the Administration, state and local governments, health care payers, providers and health systems, advocacy organizations, think tanks, and community based organizations across the country.
- **Biweekly Newsletter + Twitter**
 - Aligning for Health has dramatically expanded its biweekly newsletter in 2020 – providing updates on member social determinants leadership, news on, social needs,

and health disparities-related legislation, and information on recent social determinants reports, initiatives, opportunities and events. Readership has grown over 1000 percent since January.

- Aligning for Health has also continued to grow its presence on twitter, increasing its following by almost 50% and enhancing engagement substantially over the last year. The platform is used to highlight members, share news articles, announcements, and other information related to social determinants.