



February 4, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Committee on HELP  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member  
Committee on HELP  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

Thank you for your leadership on strengthening the nation's public health and medical preparedness and response system through your work on the Prepare for and Respond to Existing Viruses, Emerging New Threats, and Pandemics Act (PREVENT Pandemics Act).

*Aligning for Health* is an advocacy organization that brings together a broad coalition of members focused on improving health and wellbeing through efforts to address both health and social needs.<sup>1</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare many of the long-standing challenges faced not only by the United States' public health preparedness systems, but also by its health care and social services systems.

As you know, economic and social conditions have a powerful impact on individual and population health outcomes as well as health care costs. These non-clinical factors – such as housing, food assistance, income, employment status, education and transportation – have the potential to contribute to health outcomes more than clinical health care. In fact, one widely cited study found that social and environmental factors are estimated to account for up to eighty percent of health outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the siloed way in which public health, health care, and social services are paid for and administered has limited cross-sector coordination, service delivery, and data sharing. Efforts to incent connectivity and coordination between programs and systems will help to ensure that they are most effective in addressing social determinants of health and improving health and wellbeing for all.

*Therefore, Aligning for Health strongly supports the Committee's inclusion of section 201, Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Improving Health Outcomes, within the PREVENT Pandemics Act.*

Section 201 would provide critical support to community-led efforts to break down siloes by authorizing funding to eligible entities for the conduct of evidence-based or evidence-informed projects, which may include the development of networks to improve health outcomes and reduce disparities by improving the capacity of such entities to address social determinants of health in communities.

Moreover, Aligning for Health supports, and encourages the Committee to consider including, similar bipartisan legislation that would further promote interoperable network development and data sharing; development of evidence-based approaches to coordinate services and improve outcomes; and strengthen capacity to identify and address disparities across sectors:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://aligningforhealth.org>

<sup>2</sup> Hood, C. M., K. P. Gennuso, G. R. Swain, and B. B. Catlin. 2016. County health rankings: Relationships between determinant factors and health outcomes. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 50(2):129-135.



- **Leveraging Integrated Networks in Communities to Address Social Needs (LINC to Address Social Needs) Act** ([S. 509/H.R. 6072](#)) - would provide one-time seed funding for states, through representative public-private partnerships, to build or enhance sustainable networks that facilitate cross-sector communication, service coordination and consumer assistance, referral and capacity management, and outcome tracking between social service providers and health care organizations. The funding may be used to establish or expand existing secure, interoperable technology networks and provide technical assistance and support to entities in connecting to the networks. States would have flexibility to design networks that are responsive to the unique cultures and needs of their state.
- **Social Determinants Accelerator Act** ([S. 3039/H.R. 2503](#)) – would provide funding to states, local governments, and Tribal health agencies or organizations to design and implement innovative, evidence-based cross-sector strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. The legislation would also establish a federal Social Determinants Accelerator Council responsible for providing technical assistance to grantees and identifying opportunities for cross-agency collaboration.
- **Care That’s Fair Act** ([H.R. 4554](#)) – would provide funding for a grant program to analyze racial and ethnic disparities or other factors, such as social factors, that may affect health outcomes for Medicaid enrollees.
- **Social Determinants of Health Data Analysis Act of 2021** ([H.R. 4026](#)) – would require the Government Accountability Office to report on actions taken by the Department of Health and Human Services to address social determinants of health, including how data collection about social determinants complies with relevant privacy laws.
- **Collecting and Analyzing Resources Integral and Necessary for Guidance for Social Determinants (CARING for Social Determinants) Act** ([H.R. 3894](#)) – would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to issue and disseminate guidance to states to clarify strategies to address social determinants of health under the Medicaid program and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

We hope you will consider the inclusion of the above legislation to further strengthen the impact of Section 201 of the *PREVENT Pandemics Act* on addressing social determinants of health. Thank you for your leadership on these important issues and for your commitment to improving health outcomes for all.

Sincerely,

Aligning for Health