



Aligning for Health

2022 Year in Review

TO: Aligning for Health Members

FROM: Aligning for Health

DATE: December 31, 2022

RE: 2022 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 2022 objectives:

- Continue to grow the influence of Aligning for Health among policymakers in light of the elevated focus on social needs and health equity;
- Shape discussions in Washington, D.C. around social determinants of health – serving as a conduit for meaningful bipartisan interactions on social determinants, helping ensure that national priorities and interests move toward meaningful, constructive action; and
- Advance policy ideas, including legislation and/or Administrative actions that empower organizations to advance health equity by addressing both health and social needs.

Below, we provide an overview of our 2022 accomplishments. We will separately outline our policy and advocacy objectives for 2023.

Advocacy

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

- **Social Determinants Accelerator Act of 2021**
 - o The Social Determinants Accelerator Act of 2021 ([H.R. 2503/S. 3039](#)) is a bicameral, bipartisan bill that was re-introduced in 2021 by Representatives Bustos (D-IL), Cole (R-OK), McGovern (D-MA), and Mullin (R-OK), and by Sens. Young (R-IN) and Stabenow (D-MI).
 - o The bill would provide planning grants to states to establish Social Determinants Accelerator Plans – evidence-based cross-sector and locally-driven plans to address social determinants of health. 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 The Social Determinants Accelerator Act is widely recognized as one of the leading SDOH pieces of legislation, and has served as a catalyst for dialogue and policymaking on the Hill:
 - There are now 50 bipartisan cosponsors in the House and four bipartisan cosponsors in the Senate;
 - The bill was featured and favorably discussed by members during a June 2021 legislative hearing and a subsequent July 2021 markup by the House Energy & Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health.

- Energy & Commerce Committee staff have been engaged on the bill and other opportunities to address social needs and health disparities, and Aligning for Health continues to work with Committee staff and the bill leads to move this bill forward;
 - Aligning for Health has cultivated over 120 [endorsing organizations](#), many of whom have sent letters of support for this legislation to Congress. Many of these organizations signed on to a [stakeholder letter](#) organized by Aligning for Health in May 2022 urging the House Energy & Commerce Committee to advance and pass into law important SDOH legislation, including SDAA;
 - The bill was [included as a provision](#) within the Health Equity and Accountability Act (HEAA) of 2022 ([H.R. 7585/S. 4486](#)), which was introduced in April 2022 in the House and June 2022 in the Senate. The provision included within HEAA would establish an interagency council on social determinants of health and award grants to eligible entities for the development of social determinants accelerator plans.
- Successful advocacy has led to the inclusion of key components of the bill in annual appropriations, including:
- **Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Appropriations** – The [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022](#), which President Biden signed into law on March 15, 2022, included \$8M in funding for the CDC Social Determinants of Health Program responsible for granting funding to states and local communities to establish Social Determinants of Health Accelerator Plans. The report language also directed the Social Determinants of Health Council created during FY2021 to continue to provide technical assistance to state, local, and tribal jurisdictions seeking to develop these plans.
 - **The CDC opened the second round funding opportunity for the [Closing the Gap with Social Determinants of Health Accelerator Plans grants](#)** in May 2022. This cycle, the CDC funded [36 recipients](#) to develop multi-sector Accelerator Plans that lead to improved chronic disease outcomes among persons experiencing health disparities and inequities.
 - **President Biden’s FY23 [Discretionary Budget Request](#)** included \$153M for CDC’s Social Determinants of Health program, a \$145M increase over FY22 enacted amount, to support states and territories in improving health equity and SDOH through the development of SDOH Accelerator Plans.
 - **FY23 Appropriations** – FY2023 Labor-HHS-Education report language, which was released by the [House in June 2022](#) and the [Senate in July 2022](#), included \$100M in funding for CDC’s Social Determinant of Health program, a portion of which would continue to go towards the development, expansion, and implementation of Social Determinants Accelerator Grants. The final [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023](#), which was signed into law on December 29, 2022, included both \$8M in funding to continue this program in FY2023, as well as provisions around addressing factors related to improving health outcomes (stemming from the Senate HELP Committee [PREVENT Pandemics Act](#)) that includes similar concepts as this legislation.

- Aligning for Health continues to advocate for inclusion of provisions of this bill during year-end appropriations discussions, and is cultivating leadership for this bill in the 118th Congress.
- **Leveraging Integrated Networks in Communities (LINC) to Address Social Needs Act**
 - The LINC to Address Social Needs Act ([S. 509/H.R. 6072](#)) is a bipartisan, bicameral bill introduced by Sens. Sullivan (R-AK) and Murphy (D-CT) and in by Reps. Kildee (D-MI), Walorski (R-IN), Blunt Rochester (D-DE) and Hudson (R-NC). The bill has three bipartisan cosponsors in the Senate and seven bipartisan cosponsors in the House.
 - The bill would provide \$150M in funding to state-designated entities to establish or enhance existing community referral and integration network models to better coordinate health and social services.
 - This bill has catalyzed 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, HHS, and numerous stakeholders and state officials in shaping the bill language and advocating for its passage.
 - Elements of the bill were included in the Senate HELP Committee PREVENT Pandemics Act [discussion draft](#) and eventual introduced legislative text ([S. 3799](#)). Aligning for Health worked with the bill sponsors and catalyzed a group of more than 50 stakeholder organizations to [send a letter](#) to Senate HELP Committee leadership, urging inclusion of the entirety of the LINC to Address Social Needs Act in the final legislative text of the PREVENT Pandemics Act. Similar concepts were included in the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023](#), which was signed into law on December 29, 2022.
 - Aligning for Health has cultivated [72 endorsing organizations](#) in support of this legislation.
- **Other Endorsed Legislation**
 - AFH endorsed and/or liaised with offices advancing social determinants bills, including the **Social Determinants for Moms Act** ([H.R. 943/S. 851](#)), **Kira Johnson Act** ([H.R. 1212/S. 1042](#)), **Moms Matter Act** ([H.R. 909/S. 484](#)), **IMPACT to Save Moms Act** ([H.R. 950/S. 334](#)), **Social Determinants Accelerator Act** ([H.R. 2503/S. 3039](#)), **LINC to Address Social Needs Act** ([S. 509/H.R. 6072](#)), **Care That's Fair Act** ([H.R. 4554](#)), **Improving Social Determinants of Health Act** ([H.R. 379/S. 104](#)), **CARING for Social Determinants of Health Act** ([H.R. 3894](#)), **Social Determinants of Health Data Analysis Act** ([H.R. 4026](#)), **Addressing Social Determinants in Medicare Advantage Act** ([H.R. 4074](#)), **Building a Sustainable Workforce for Healthy Communities Act** ([S. 3479/H.R. 8151](#)), **White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health Act** ([H.R. 5724/S. 3064](#)), and the **John Lewis Equality in Medicare & Medicaid Treatment (EMMT) Act** ([S. 4067/H.R. 7755](#)).
- **SDOH, Health Equity and Maternal Health Legislative Tracker**
 - Aligning for Health also maintains a legislative tracker of legislation introduced throughout the 117th Congress related to social determinants of health, health disparities and health equity, and maternal and infant health. This is a public resource, and we update this tracker both on our [website](#) and through a more comprehensive PDF document bi-weekly.

Aligning for Health has worked to educate and build momentum in Congress and the Administration to advance social determinants legislation and policies, including by:

- **Continuing to Support the Congressional Social Determinants of Health Caucus**
 - o Aligning for Health supported the development and launch of the bipartisan Congressional Social Determinants of Health Caucus, which officially launched in the House in July 2021.
 - o We continue to support the work of the Caucus by:
 - Conducting outreach to House offices encouraging key leaders in the SDOH space to join the Caucus, leading to 32 bipartisan members as of November 2022;
 - Executing the development and maintenance of the Caucus [website](#), including all content and design elements;
 - Providing supportive logistics, speaker recruitment, and content development for various Caucus briefings and events, including a [briefing](#) focused on food insecurity and nutrition in July 2022; and
 - Planning for a transition in leadership of the Caucus in anticipation of co-lead retirements and the start of the 118th Congress.
- **Supporting various Members of Congress in preparation for various hearings and events.** This includes working with Members in developing questions and leading discussions around the intersection of SDOH and public health, which captured the priorities of Aligning for Health members and helped frame SDOH issues in productive and bipartisan ways in both the House and Senate.
- **Informing policymakers on key committees in Congress and key agencies within the Administration** of relevant SDOH opportunities in response to legislative hearings and requests for information, including:
 - o [Stakeholder sign-on letter](#) to the **Senate HELP Committee**, requesting the inclusion of the LINC to Address Social Needs Act in the PREVENT Pandemics Act legislative package
 - o [Letter](#) to **Senate HELP Committee**, in response to request for comments on the PREVENT Pandemics Act
 - o Comments to **CMS** on the [Advance Notice of Methodological Changes for CY2023 for Medicare Advantage Capitation Rates and Part C and Part D Payment Policies](#)
 - o Comments to **CMS** on the [CY2023 Policy and Technical Changes to the Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Programs proposed rule](#)
 - o Comments to the **Healthy Future Task Force, Security Subcommittee** in response to [a request for information on pandemic preparedness, public health, and supply chains](#)
 - o Comments to the **White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)** in response to a [request for information on strengthening community health through technology](#)
 - o [Stakeholder sign-on letter](#) to **House Energy & Commerce Committee leadership**, urging the Committee to advance and pass into law key SDOH legislation

- Comments to the **HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH)** in response to a [request for information on the HHS Initiative to Strengthen Primary Health Care](#)
- Comments to **CMS** in response to a [request for information on the Medicare Advantage program](#)
- Comments to **CMS** in response to the [Make Your Voice Heard: Promoting Efficiency and Equity Within CMS Programs](#) request for information
- [Sign-on letter](#) to **Congressional leadership** urging support for the passage of the Building a Sustainable Workforce for Health Communities Act
- **Aligning for Health maintains an ongoing dialogue with Congressional and Administration officials** on social determinants policy and has shared information with the Administration on SDOH legislation (including SDAA and LINC to Address Social Needs Act), leveraging social determinants of health data and developing community integrated networks, the importance of cross-sector coordination to address health and wellbeing, and screening for social needs.
 - Aligning for Health invited several officials to speak at Aligning for Health meetings this year to share their work and to engage in discussion with members, including:
 - **Dr. Doug Jacobs**, Chief Transformation Officer, Center for Medicare, CMS
 - **Dr. LaShawn McIver**, Director, Office of Minority Health, CMS
 - **Ellen-Marie Whelan**, Chief Population Health Officer, Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services, CMS
 - **Sarah Downer**, SDOH Lead, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, CMS
 - **Dr. Sandra E. Ford**, Special Assistant to the President for Public Health and Science, the White House
 - **Shelby Luce**, former Legislative Assistant for Rep. Jim McGovern, Chair of the House Rules Committee
- **Working to Develop Proposals Related to Social Needs Screening**
 - Aligning for Health convened a small working group of its members for a Social Needs Screening Task Force early in 2022, after members had identified enabling social needs screening and data collection as a top priority for 2022.
 - The goals of this subgroup included: Discuss current governmental and nongovernmental efforts to identify and address social needs; Identify common barriers and challenges to social needs screening or identification; and Brainstorm potential Administrative or legislative policy solutions. The subgroup met on a monthly basis to discuss potential barriers and opportunities related to, and to develop solutions to enable, screening and data collection.
 - The subgroup came up with a three-pronged policy approach that will complement and amplify the work already underway at CMS and HHS around screening for social needs:
 - First, we proposed a new initiative and accompanying grant opportunity to provide targeted education and technical assistance to entities.
 - Second, we encouraged ONC to establish a publicly available standardized social needs question bank that will improve collection of standardized social needs data.

- Finally, we proposed that CMS should require payers to develop a social needs assessment plan, similar to a quality improvement strategy, which would outline the payer’s approach to identifying and addressing social determinants for its members.

Thought Leadership & Communications

- Webinars

- Aligning for Health held or helped facilitate two widely attended webinars this year, highlighting legislative action to address social needs and advance health equity:
 - Aligning for Health supported the Congressional SDOH Caucus in its second [briefing](#) in July 2022, called “**Addressing Food Insecurity and Nutrition as a Social Determinant of Health.**” The briefing highlighted the drivers and health impacts of food insecurity, best practices in helping to connect individuals with access to healthy food, and potential policy approaches to alleviate the impact of food insecurity. The webinar featured Caucus members and panelists from across the health and social services sectors on best practices and models around food as an SDOH, as well as their recommendations for what Congress and the Administration can do to address this issue to improve health outcomes.
 - Aligning for Health held a [briefing](#) in September 2022 highlighting programs and best practices on coordinating funding and data to address SDOH. The webinar featured perspectives and examples from the federal government, state and local leaders, and their partners engaged in this work. Notably, the webinar featured Dr. Sandra Ford, Special Assistant to the President for Public Health and Science at the White House, who provided remarks on the White House’s work to address and improve SDOH across the federal government.
- These 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.

- Speaking Engagements

- Aligning for Health also had the opportunity to participate in many gatherings, panels, and conferences to share our work on SDOH and health equity, including:
 - CMS Office of Minority Health Stakeholder Roundtable; Ongoing Brookings Institution [Braiding and Blending](#) and [Health and Economic Mobility/Healthy Neighborhoods](#) convenings; HIMSS SDOH Task Force; RISE Social Determinants of Health [Annual Conference](#), AHIMA [Annual Conference](#); National Academy for State Health Policy [Annual Conference](#); National Association of Medicaid Directors [Annual Conference](#); Executives for Health Innovation webinar and others.

- Social Determinants of Health Policy Forum

- Aligning for Health [partnered](#) with RISE to host the inaugural [Social Determinants of Health Policy Forum](#), taking place November 28-30, 2022 in Washington, D.C. The conference will



bring together policymakers, policy experts, and practitioners from across the health and social services sectors to explore the current and future state of social determinants policy.

- Aligning for Health played an integral role in developing the [agenda](#) and content for the conference, as well as recruiting the speakers from across the federal, state and local governments, as well as local communities and health and social services industry, who will participate in keynote remarks and panels throughout the two-day event.
- The Forum is expected to be attended by more than 250 participants.

- **Biweekly Newsletter + Twitter**

- Aligning for Health has continued to expand and improve its highly regarded biweekly newsletter in 2022 – providing updates on member social determinants leadership, news on social needs and health equity, updates on SDOH- and health disparities-related legislation and Administration activity, and information on recent social determinants reports, initiatives, opportunities and events. The number of subscribers has increased by approximately 34 percent (by 757 subscribers) since January 2022.
- Aligning for Health has also continued to grow its presence on Twitter, increasing its following by about 10 percent through November 2022 and enhancing engagement over the last year. The platform is used to highlight members, share news articles, announcements, legislation, and other information related to social determinants.