

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)*.

We were pleased to see the inclusion of provisions to address social determinants of health in the *PREVENT Pandemics Act* and appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on this important legislation. As you consider options to strengthen this legislation, we encourage you to consider the inclusion of the full text of the bipartisan [Leveraging Integrated Networks in Communities \(LINC\) to Address Social Needs Act \(S. 509/H.R. 6072\)](#), which will support cross-sector efforts to coordinate and address health-related social needs for those most vulnerable to the impacts of the current and future pandemics.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the inequities that exist in our health care system. It has also disproportionately harmed minority and underserved communities, and those with underlying health conditions or other risk factors, which are often exacerbated by existing social determinants of health. More broadly, the pandemic has emphasized the need for improved coordination across sectors to better identify and meet the needs of patients and improve their overall health outcomes, helping to build stronger, more resilient communities.

Section 201 of the discussion draft allows grant funding to be used, among other purposes, to establish, maintain, or improve, in consultation with State, local, or Tribal health departments, technology platforms or networks to support coordination among appropriate entities. It also would support providing information on health and related social services, which may include activities to improve data collection for public health purposes. While we support the inclusion of this section, we encourage the Committee to bolster this provision by incorporating the full text of the *LINC to Address Social Needs Act*.^{1,2}

The bipartisan *LINC to Address Social Needs Act*, which was introduced in the Senate in March 2021, 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 will have flexibility to design networks that are responsive to the unique cultures and needs of their state.

This *LINC to Address Social Needs Act* would create a new and unprecedented ability to coordinate care and measure the impact of social care interventions on health, health care spending, and community

¹ LINC to Address Social Needs Act, S. 509, available here: <https://bit.ly/3qsEO7F>

² Aligning for Health, LINC to Address Social Needs Act. Available here: <https://bit.ly/35Ndq12>

wellbeing. This infrastructure will help leverage technology and increase capacity of the health and social services sectors to improve coordination and overall health outcomes, particularly for those individuals who are most susceptible to contracting this or future viruses due to chronic conditions or unaddressed health-related social needs.

The undersigned organizations strongly encourage you to consider the inclusion of this language, developed through a multi-stakeholder process with significant agency input, in the final version of the *PREVENT Pandemics Act*. The inclusion of the *LINC to Address Social Needs Act* will strengthen our ability to better respond to and address the health-related social needs of individuals, especially those who are underserved or most at risk of inequitable access to care during periods of emergencies.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Aligning for Health
Alliance for Better Health
American Association of Service Coordinators
American Association on Health and Disability
American Health Information Management Association
American Medical Association
AMGA
Arizona Health Information Management Association
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Blue Cross Blue Shield Association
CommonSpirit Health
Council on Social Work Education
CyncHealth
Educational Resolutions
Executives for Health Innovation
GRACHIE
Greater Flint Health Coalition
Gryphon Place
Healthcare Leadership Council
Healthy Alliance Independent Practice Association
Indiana Public Health Association
JNP PopHealth Solutions, LLC
KidSucceed LLC
Lakeshore Foundation
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Michigan 2-1-1
Michigan Association of United Ways
Michigan Health Information Network
Midwest Health Connection
National Association of ACOs
National Council of Urban Indian Health
National Council on Aging
National Kidney Foundation
National PACE Association

Nemours Children's Health
Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation
PointClickCare
Private Essential Access Community Hospitals
Purchaser Business Group on Health
Revitalize Community Development Corporation
Signify Health
Social Current
Society of Student Advocates for Community Health (SSACH)
Special Needs Plan Alliance
The Root Cause Coalition
Uber Health
Unite Us
UPMC Health Plan
Velatura Public Benefit Corp.
Visible Network Labs
Vizient, Inc.
WE in the World
Wholesome Wave
YMCA of the USA