

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 30, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer,

We write to request that the next coronavirus legislative package include critical provisions to address racial health disparities exposed during the pandemic. Specifically, we urge you to include the provisions listed below from H.R. 6637, the Health Equity and Accountability Act (HEAA) of 2020, which currently has the support of over 100 Members of Congress.

All individuals should have the resources and care that they need to thrive. HEAA, the Tri-Caucus' signature bill, is the most comprehensive legislation addressing health inequalities, their intersections with immigration status, ethnicity, age, disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, language, and socio-economic status, along with obstacles associated with historical and contemporary injustices. While there are other valuable legislative proposals that address disparities in the COVID-19 pandemic, HEAA 2020 establishes policy and infrastructure to eliminate long-standing inequities, while mitigating harm from this pandemic and laying the groundwork for a healthier future for all. Key provisions in HEAA include:

*Health Care Coverage*

- Remove citizenship and immigration barriers to access affordable health care under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) (Sec. 402)
- Ensure Medicaid parity for U.S. territories (Sec. 404)
- Allow individuals who are lawfully present in the United States to be eligible for Medicare (Sec. 407)
- Remove barriers to health care and nutrition assistance for children, pregnant persons, and lawfully present individuals (Sec. 502)
- Expand Medicaid coverage to 1 year for all postpartum mothers and establish a series of programs addressing maternal mortality (Sec. 503)

### *Data Collection and Reporting*

- Amendment to the Public Health Service Act (PHSA) to promote data collection, analysis, and reporting of demographic data among federally supported health programs (Sec. 101)
- Eliminate the prerequisite of direct appropriations for data collection and analysis (Sec. 102)
- Collection of demographic data for the Social Security and Medicare programs (Sec. 103)
- Require all agencies that have collected data related to race, ethnicity, sex, primary language, sexual orientation, disability status, gender identity, age and socioeconomic status during the previous year to submit these data to a centralized electronic repository of government data on the well-being of the U.S. population (Sec. 106)
- Improving health data regarding Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) (Sec. 110)

### *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services*

- Ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate services in health care (Sec. 203, 204, 206, 207, 209, 210, 605)
- Increase availability of non-English language speaking providers (Sec. 430)
- Increase health workforce diversity, initiatives to ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate services (Sec. 301, 302, 303, 314)

### *Health Information Technology and Infrastructure*

- Facilitate the provision of telehealth services across state lines (Sec. 422)
- Extend funding to strengthen the health IT infrastructure in racial and ethnic minority communities (Sec. 811)
- Extend competitive grants for the development of loan programs to facilitate adoption of certified electronic health record technology by providers serving racial and ethnic minority groups (Sec. 812)
- Data collection and assessments on health IT impact in minority communities conducted in coordination with minority-serving institutions (Sec. 821, 822)

### *Mental Health*

- Direct the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to develop and implement an outreach and education strategy to promote behavioral and mental health and reduce stigma associated with mental health conditions and substance abuse among minority populations (Sec. 607)
- Build an effective workforce in mental health (Sec. 609)
- Provide mental health services for immigrants and refugees at the border (Sec. 610)

### *Oversight*

- Protects the Offices of Minority Health from any changes in HHS structure (Sec. 425)
- Establish an Office of Health Disparities to ensure that the health programs, activities, and operations of health entities that receive federal financial assistance are abiding by the prohibition on discrimination (Sec. 903)
- Establishes an interagency counsel and grant programs on social determinants of health (Sec. 1009)

*Research*

- NIH grants for data collection and analysis of health disparities to minority-serving institutions (Sec. 107)
- Require GAO to study the racial and ethnic diversity of all those involved in grant-making (applicants, grantees, and grant-makers) of NIH grants (Sec. 906)
- CDC grant program for evidence- based ways to decrease health disparities from the built environment (Sec. 1103).

The pandemic has exposed long-standing health disparities, with reports showing that low-income people of color are disproportionately impacted. We must address the underlying challenges that prevent communities in need from receiving high-quality health care, especially during a pandemic. Most importantly, COVID-19 points to the need to implement a comprehensive and strategic plan to improve the health and well-being of communities of color through a health equity perspective.

Again, I ask that you consider the provisions of the Health Equity and Accountability Act as you finalize the next COVID-19 relief package. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro  
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Judy Chu  
Chair, Congressional Asian Pacific  
American Caucus (CAPAC)



Karen Bass  
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

Al Green  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

Brenda F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

David Scott  
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

G.K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal  
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Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar  
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Jahana Hayes  
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John B. Larson  
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Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly  
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TJ Cox  
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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

José E. Serrano  
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Lucille Roybal-Allard  
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Nydia M. Velázquez  
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Ted Deutch  
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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke  
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