

October 6, 2020

**Re: Join Senator Mazie K. Hirono as an Original Cosponsor of the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2020**

Dear Senator:

As organizations committed to achieving health equity, **we ask that you join Senator Mazie K. Hirono and sign on as an original co-sponsor of the Health Equity and Accountability Act (HEAA) of 2020**, the Senate companion to Congressman Jesus “Chuy” García’s [H.R. 6637](#) introduced in April 2020.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown how important it is for all people—no matter where they were born or where they live in our country—to have easy access to affordable health care. Recent reports show that low-income communities of color are disproportionately impacted.<sup>1</sup> More than three in four children who have died from COVID-19 were Latino, Black, or American Indian.<sup>2</sup> The pandemic has also exposed long-standing racial and ethnic health [disparities](#) that we have sought to eliminate for decades, including:

- Black adults are 60% more likely than White adults to be diagnosed with diabetes.<sup>3</sup>
- Adults living with a disability are more likely to have cardiovascular (heart) disease.<sup>4</sup>
- Nearly six in 10 Latino adults are unable to communicate with their doctors due to language barriers.<sup>5</sup>
- Black women are three to four times more likely to experience a pregnancy-related death than White women.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Artiga, S., B. Corallo and Olivia Pham. Racial Disparities in COVID-19: Key Findings from Available Data and Analysis. August 17, 2020. Kaiser Family Foundation. Accessed September 14, 2020. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-covid-19-key-findings-available-data-analysis/>.

<sup>2</sup> Bixler D, Miller AD, Mattison CP, et al. SARS-CoV-2–Associated Deaths Among Persons Aged <21 Years - United States, February 12–July 31, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 15 September 2020. Accessed September 16, 2020. [http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6937e4external icon](http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6937e4external%20icon).

<sup>3</sup> Office of Minority Health. Diabetes and African Americans. December 2019. United States Department of Health and Human Services. Office of Minority Health. Policy and Data. Minority Population Profiles. Accessed April 14, 2020. <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=18>.

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Persons with Disabilities as an Unrecognized Health Disparity Population. Reducing Health Disparities for People with Disabilities: A Public Health Challenge. 2015. CDC Disability and Health Prevention. Accessed April 14, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/features/unrecognizedpopulation.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Associate Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Communication and Long-Term Care: Technology Use and Cultural Barriers Among Hispanics. July 2018. AP and NORC. Access April 14, 2020. <https://www.longtermcarepoll.org/project/communication-and-long-term-care-technology-use-and-cultural-barriers-among-hispanics/>.

<sup>6</sup> National Partnership for Women and Families. Black Women’s Maternal Health: A Multifaceted Approach to Addressing Persistent and Dire Health Disparities. April 2018. NPWF Issue Brief. Accessed April 14, 2020. <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/health-care/maternity/black-womens-maternal-health-issue-brief.pdf>.

- Asian Americans comprise 60% of the U.S. population living with Hepatitis B.<sup>7</sup>
- 45% of undocumented adult immigrants are uninsured, compared to 8% of citizens.<sup>8</sup>
- American Indians and Alaska Natives continue to die at higher rates than other Americans in many categories, including cirrhosis, diabetes, suicide, and colorectal cancer.<sup>9,10</sup>

That is why it is imperative that we work together to advance inclusive policies like HEAA to eliminate barriers to coverage, expand access to affordable health care and target investments that strengthen the health care system so that it works for all, especially for individuals living at the intersections, in order to eliminate health disparities. In the context of COVID-19, HEAA would ensure that all who need free testing, treatment, and access to a vaccine (when available) can receive it.

[HEAA](#) is the only legislation that directly addresses the intersections of health disparities and immigration status, age, disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, language, and socio-economic status. Since the 108th Congress, HEAA has provided policymakers with a comprehensive set of smart, strategic policy solutions designed to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities. Since then, the Congressional Tri-Caucus, comprised of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) has led the reintroduction of HEAA every Congress.

In the 116th Congress, HEAA ([H.R. 6637](#)) was introduced in the House by Congressman Jesus “Chuy” García on behalf of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC). H.R. 6637 received widespread support from more than 100 Members of Congress and 230 local, state, and national [organizations](#).

As we collectively work to respond to today’s unprecedented public health and economic crises, HEAA serves as a timely and strategic approach for Congress to provide [immediate relief](#) to hardworking Americans who continue to be impacted by COVID-19. For these reasons, we ask that you join Senator Mazie Hirono and sign on as an original co-sponsor for HEAA in the Senate this Congress.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to achieving health equity for all.

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<sup>7</sup> Chen, M. and Julie Dang. Hepatitis B among Asian Americans: Prevalence, progress, and prospects for control. November 2015. World Journal of Gastroenterology. Accessed April 14, 2020.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4641114/>.

<sup>8</sup> Artiga, S. and Maria Diaz. Health Coverage and Care of Undocumented Immigrants. July 2019. Kaiser Family Foundation Disparities Policy. Issue Brief. Accessed April 14, 2020. <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-and-care-of-undocumented-immigrants/>.

<sup>9</sup> Indian Health Service. Indian Health Disparities. October 2019. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Accessed April 26, 2020.

[https://www.ihs.gov/sites/newsroom/themes/responsive2017/display\\_objects/documents/factsheets/Disparities.pdf](https://www.ihs.gov/sites/newsroom/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/factsheets/Disparities.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> American Cancer Society. Colorectal Cancer Facts & Figures 2020-2022. 2020. American Cancer Society. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/colorectal-cancer-facts-and-figures/colorectal-cancer-facts-and-figures-2020-2022.pdf>.

Sincerely,

UnidosUS  
ADAP Advocacy Association  
Adelante Mujeres  
Advocates for Youth  
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation  
American Kidney Fund  
American Medical Student Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Society of Nephrology  
American Society on Aging  
American Therapeutic Recreation Association  
American Thoracic Society  
Any Positive Change Inc.  
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers  
Arizona peer and family coalition  
Arizona Rural Health Association (AzRHA)  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Asian Health Coalition  
Asian Health Services  
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)  
Asian Resources, Inc.  
Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA)  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)  
Association of Black Cardiologists  
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Atlanta Pride Committee  
Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center  
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council  
Bronx Health REACH  
Building Skills Partnership  
CAEAR Coalition  
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network  
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Cancer Support Community  
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities  
Cascade AIDS Project  
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for Pan Asian Community Services  
Center for Public Representation  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Center for Urban and Racial Equity  
Center on Halsted  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative  
Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO)  
Child and Family Resources, Inc.  
Children's Action Alliance  
Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy, & Research Organization (CLLARO)  
Colorado School Medicaid Consortium  
Community Access National Network (CANN)  
Community Catalyst  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Desert AIDS Project  
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)  
Dominico-American Society of Queens  
East Bay Getting to Zero  
Eastmont Community Center  
El Centro de la Raza  
El Centro, Inc.  
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)  
Empowerment Systems, Inc.  
Enlace Chicago  
Epilepsy Foundation  
Equality California  
Equality North Carolina  
Esperanza Health Centers  
EverThrive Illinois  
Families USA  
Family Involvement Center  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Forward Together Action  
Gads Hill Center  
Geo Free Hawaii  
Global Liver Institute  
GoodWorks: North Alabama Harm Reduction  
Grace New Beginning Church  
Guadalupe Centers  
Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center  
Hep B United  
Hep Free Hawaii  
Hepatitis B Foundation  
Hispanic Federation  
Hispanic Health Network/Latino Commission on AIDS  
Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama  
Hispanic Services Council

Hispanic Unity of Florida, Inc.  
Hudson Pride Center  
Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation  
Illinois Migrant Council  
Impetus - Let's Get Started LLS  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
International Community Health Services  
Jacobs Institute of Women's Health  
Justice for Migrant Women  
Justice in Aging  
Korean Community Center of the East Bay  
La Clinica de La Raza  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Lanai Community Health Center  
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California  
Living United for Change in Arizona  
LULAC-IL  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Mazzoni Center  
Medical Organization for Latino Advancement  
Mental Health America  
Mexican American Opportunity Foundation  
Mexican American Unity Council, Inc.  
Michigan League for Public Policy  
MomsRising  
Mount Sinai Medical Center  
Multi-Ethnic Collaborative of Community Agencies  
NAACP  
NARAL Pro-Choice America  
NASTAD  
National Action Network (NAN)  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter  
National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network  
National Community Action Partnership  
National Council for Diversity in the Health Professions  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Harm Reduction Coalition  
National Health Law Program  
National Hispanic Health Association  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Latino Behavioral Health Association  
National Minority Quality Forum  
National Organization for Women

National Partnership for New Americans  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Patient Advocate Foundation  
National REACH Coalition  
National Urban League  
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable  
New Mexico Asian Family Center  
North Carolina Justice Center  
NORTHWEST FAMILY SERVICES  
Northwest Health Law Advocates  
Northwest Side Housing Center  
one-n-ten  
OutCenter of Southwest Michigan  
Para Los Niños  
People For the American Way  
PFLAG National  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Power to Decide  
Prevention Access Campaign  
Prevention Institute  
Project Access NOW  
Public Health Justice Collective  
Public Justice Center  
RESULTS  
San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
San Francisco Hepatitis C Task Force  
Services, Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Silver State Equality-Nevada  
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Street Level Health Project  
Tennessee Justice Center  
The 6:52 Project Foundation, Inc.  
The Arc of the United States  
The Children's Partnership  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
The LGBT Center of Greater Reading  
The Praxis Project  
The Pride Center at Equality Park  
The Sacramento LGBT Community Center  
The Source LGBT+ Center  
The Wall Las Memorias Project  
Treatment Action Group  
Trust for America's Health  
UnidosUS  
University of Michigan, School of Public Health

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity  
Virginia Poverty Law Center  
Voices for Progress  
Waimanalo Health Center  
Wildfire: Igniting Community Action to End Poverty in Arizona  
William Way LGBT Community Center, Philadelphia, PA  
Young Alaskans for Anti-Poverty Initiatives  
YWCA USA