

Health Equity & Accountability Act

NFPRHA Supports H.R. 5475

Sponsored by Congresswoman Robin Kelly (D-IL) in 2016, the Health Equity and Accountability Act (HEAA) is proactive legislation intended to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the US health system for minorities and other populations. The Congressional Tri-Caucus, which is made up of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, has introduced the legislation each Congress since 2007.

What Does the Bill Do?

HEAA seeks to comprehensively address racial and ethnic health disparities by expanding access to care and improving health outcomes among minority populations in the US. Some highlights include:

- Removes eligibility criteria based on immigration status, extending access to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) health insurance marketplace to the previously excluded undocumented immigrants and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) participants. HEAA also repeals the requirement for Medicaid beneficiaries to submit documentation evidencing citizenship or nationality as well as the five-year bar faced by lawfully present immigrants accessing Medicaid and CHIP.
- Expands culturally and linguistically appropriate health services by increasing the federal reimbursement rate for language services under Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), establishing a pilot program for developing and improving state Medicaid programs providing on-site medical interpreting services. It also establishes funding to improve health care among patient populations with low health literacy, adds language access services as an essential health benefit under the ACA, and supports workforce diversity.
- Provides community-based grants to support programs intended to reduce health disparities as well as grants to promote positive health behavior for racial and ethnic minority women and children. HEAA also established grants to provide youth in communities at disproportionate risk for unintended teen pregnancy with information and skills.
- Ensures information is provided regarding emergency contraception in publicly funded hospitals providing care to sexual assault victims and timely provision of FDA-approved contraception in pharmacies. It also authorizes state grants to conduct comprehensive sexual health education

programs.

NFPRHA Supports HEAA

While the ACA makes significant advances in extending access to coverage, achieving health equity and addressing health disparities experienced by communities remains a fundamental challenge and standalone legislation is needed to address these challenges. Safety-net family planning providers are on the front line providing health care to underserved communities. Title X-funded health centers serve as an essential point of access to care for all patients, regardless of immigration status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and have long been a source of safe, high-quality, trusted family planning and sexual health care. For many uninsured or underinsured individuals, Title X-funded care is often their only access to health care available. HEAA dedicates more resources to safety-net providers, programs, and community partners who are called upon to provide preventive care to underserved communities across the country.