



ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

Equity Legislation Monitor – 118th Congress

- The Coalition champions the development and implementation of policies that address the social determinants of health, lower healthcare costs and improve health outcomes.
- The Coalition's Equity Legislation Monitor, (ELM), is a tool developed by our organization to identify and track relevant legislation on key equity and SDoH issues introduced in the 118th Congress.
- The ELM was developed with input from the Coalition's Board, Advocacy Committee and Staff to provide a succinct list of equity-focused bills that will have the broadest and most lasting impact in achieving health equity. This list will be continuously updated, making the ELM a go-to source for the most recent and pertinent legislation related to equity and SDoH issues.
- TRCC will provide analysis of the bills featured in the ELM, along with its updated status and any related materials shared by Congressional offices to provide the full picture of all each piece of legislation.
- The ELM focuses on eight priority areas: digital equity; environment and climate change; gun violence prevention; housing; maternal health; nutrition and food security; rural health and payment models. These topics were chosen because they most align with TRCC's Mission, each of the [Coalition's Four Corners for 2023](#), and the priorities of our member organizations.
- For further information about the ELM, please contact Tom Dorney at tdorney@rootcausecoalition.org or Hannah Miller at hmiller@rootcausecoalition.org

Digital Equity

The COVID-19 pandemic has increasingly shifted many parts of personal and professional life online, calling further attention to issues of digital equity, which has emerged as a key priority for the Coalition. As broadband is regularly used for school, work and telehealth services, affordable high-speed internet is essential for healthcare access as well as day-to-day parts of life. Yet, estimates show that more than 30 million Americans, the majority of whom live on Tribal lands or in other rural areas, do not have access to broadband infrastructure that delivers reliable service. The Coalition highlights policies that work to close this digital divide, especially as the pandemic continues to affect life across the country.

Resources and Information

- Federal Communications Commission: ["Eighth Broadband Progress Report"](#)



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- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality database: [“Poverty and Access to Internet, by County”](#)
- Journal of Medical Internet Research article: [“Digital Health Equity and COVID-19: The Innovation Curve Cannot Reinforce the Social Gradient of Health”](#)
- NJP Digital Medicine journal article: [“Digital inclusion as a social determinant of health”](#)
- American Journal of Public Health article: [“Broadband Internet Access Is a Social Determinant of Health!”](#)
- Cardiovascular Risk Reports journal article: [“Can you see my screen?” Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Telehealth”](#)
- JAMA journal article: [“Bridging the Digital Divide to Avoid Leaving the Most Vulnerable Behind”](#)
- Brookings Institute research: [“Using digital health to improve health outcomes and equity”](#)
- American Hospital Association article: [“Digital Is the Next Frontier of Health Equity”](#)

Community Broadband Act of 2023

H.R. 2552 - Representative Anna Eshoo (D-CA)

- Introduced on 4/10/23
- 13 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

S.1197 - Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ)

- Introduced on 4/19/23
- 5 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

The bill would:

- Bridge the digital divide by allowing local communities to ensure their residents have broadband access through expanded public-private partnerships and locally-owned broadband systems.
- Currently, 21 states have passed laws that either restrict or outright prohibit local communities from investing local dollars in building their own broadband networks.
- Nullify laws in 21 states that either restrict or outright prohibit local communities from investing local dollars in building their own broadband networks.
- Preserve the local right to self-determination in connecting communities and allowing residents better access to high-quality internet services for school, work and telehealth needs.

Status: The bill was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Additional Information

- Rep. Eshoo office press release: [Rep. Eshoo, Sen. Booker Introduce Bill to Expand Internet Access and Protect Local Communities’ Broadband Networks](#)
- National Association of Counties article: [Support Community Broadband Act](#)



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- New America article: [House Democrats introduce legislation to expand affordable broadband](#)
[Rep. Eshoo, Sen. Booker Introduce Bill to Boost Community Broadband Networks access](#)
- National League of Cities article: [Support Broadband Access for All Communities](#)

Environment and the Climate Crisis

As the threat of climate change continues to grow, its environmental consequences have exacerbated existing health disparities. New public health challenges, persistent air and water quality issues, and increased frequency of extreme weather events disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color, who typically have less access to social, political, and economic power. A 2021 report from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found that Black and African American individuals are 40% more likely than non-Black individuals to currently live in areas with the highest projected increases in mortality rates due to climate-driven changes in extreme temperatures. TRCC highlights policies that address these drastic inequities through climate mitigation and public health strategies to ensure a healthy, equitable and climate-resilient future for all Americans.

Green New Deal for Health

H.R. 2764 - Representative Ro Khanna (D-CA)

- Introduced on 4/20/23
- 26 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

S. 1229 - Senator Ed Markey (D-MA)

- Introduced on 4/20/23
- 3 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

This bill would:

- Address the intersecting effects of the climate crisis, social and economic inequality and gaps in health care access in the U.S by investing in community health centers, community mental health services and community heat resilience programs.
- Include funding to expand the community health workforce and provide climate & health education and training grants for providers to better understand the health impacts of the climate crisis.
- Establish a public accountability process when hospitals propose closures or reductions of services and a federal grants program for public and nonprofit medical facilities working to improve their climate resilience and disaster mitigation efforts.
- Direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a task force to develop policies and procedures for the mandatory public disclosure of emissions and climate risk of FDA-approved drugs, devices, and biologics in an effort to establish a transparent, resilient, and green medical supply chain.



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- Direct the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to develop reports to support public health and healthcare professionals in preparing for and responding to the health impacts and health disparities of climate change.

Status: The bill was referred to the House Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Science, Space, and Technology and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Additional Information

- Sen. Markey's office: [Markey, Khanna Announce Green New Deal For Health To Tackle Intersecting Climate And Public Health Crises](#)
- Sen. Markey's office: [A Green New Deal for Health](#)
- Rep. Khanna's office: [Twitter thread with background information](#)

Gun Violence Prevention

In the United States, gun violence is a major public health problem and a leading cause of premature death. Preventing death, disability and injury from gun violence requires a public health approach that involves data collection and surveillance, research to understand which policies and programs are effective in decreasing gun violence, initiatives to implement those measures that are shown to work and continued surveillance and evaluation.

Resources and Information

- American Psychological Association: [Gun Violence Prevention Resources Page](#)
- American Public Health Association (APHA): [Gun Violence Resources Page](#)
- APHA: [Advocacy Fact Sheet for Gun Violence Prevention](#)
- President Biden: [Executive Order on Reducing Gun Violence and Making Our Communities Safer](#)
- American Medical Association: [AMA task force to confront "health care crisis" of gun violence](#)
- Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC): [At the crossroads: Addressing gun violence as a public health crisis](#)
- AAMC article: [Fewer gun deaths: Medical schools prioritize prevention](#)
- The Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions: [Resource Page](#)
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [Overview of current CDC research investments to reduce injuries and deaths from firearms](#)

Housing

Housing is a foundational social determinant of health. Redlining, segregation, and gentrification are major ways that health disparities have emerged and are sustained in the U.S. over time. Research has shown that those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity face substantially higher risk of physical and



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mental illness and have consistently higher health care expenditures due to higher rates of chronic disease and emergency treatment usage. TRCC highlights policies and housing interventions that improve housing stability and health outcomes while decreasing healthcare costs and advancing health equity.

Resources and Information

- American Public Health Association (APHA) report: [“Creating The Healthiest Nation: Health and Housing Equity”](#)
- APHA and Kaiser Permanente report: [“Housing Affordability and Quality: A Driver of Community Health”](#)
- Urban Institute article: [“The Connection between Housing, Health, and Racial Equity”](#)
- Green and Healthy Homes Initiative report: [“Achieving Health and Social Equity Through Housing”](#)
- International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health article: [“Investing in Public Health Infrastructure to Address the Complexities of Homelessness”](#)
- Medical Care Journal article: [“Does Housing Improve Health Care Utilization and Costs? A Longitudinal Analysis of Health Administrative Data Linked to a Cohort of Individuals With a History of Homelessness”](#)
- AMA Journal of Ethics article: [“How Medicaid and States Could Better Meet Health Needs of Persons Experiencing Homelessness”](#)
- The Lancet journal article: [“Adverse childhood experiences and related outcomes among adults experiencing homelessness: a systematic review and meta-analysis”](#)

DASH (Decent, Affordable, Safe Housing for All) Act

S. 680 - Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR)

- Introduced on 3/27/23
- 5 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

This bill would:

- Address the housing crisis by establishing a Housing Choice Voucher for individuals or families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness with incomes under 50 percent of the area’s median income.
- Provide voucher recipients with access to health care services including mental health, dental, and vision, substance use disorder treatment and assistance in enrolling in Medicare or Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or other economic assistance programs.
- Provide recipients with access to family self-sufficiency programs, credit or housing counseling, education services including credit recovery, and transportation to any of these services.
- Allocate \$10 billion in the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) for the next ten years to states to acquire, develop or rehabilitate deeply affordable housing.
- Include funding for a pilot program to invest in innovative, cost-effective and efficient building methods to reduce the cost of developing affordable housing.



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- Strengthen the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) by preserving and protecting current LIHTC properties, dramatically expanding production, and extending housing to those at extremely low incomes.
- Establish a Renter's Tax Credit and Middle-Income Housing Tax Credit (MIHTC) and would invest in homeownership in underserved communities with new tax credits and down payment assistance, including a down payment tax credit for first-time homebuyers.

Status: The bill was referred to the Committee on Finance.

Additional Information

- Senate Finance Committee: [Wyden Reintroduces Comprehensive Bill to End Homelessness and Tackle Housing Affordability Crisis](#)
- Sen. Wyden's office: [DASH Act One pager](#)
- National Low Income Housing Coalition: [Senator Wyden Introduces DASH Act; NLIHC Continues to Oppose Wasteful MIHTC Proposal](#)
- Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition: [Decent, Affordable, Safe Housing for All \(DASH\) Act Includes Key AHCA Provisions](#)
- KVAL News article: [Wyden addresses housing concerns in reintroduction of DASH Act](#)

Infant and Maternal Health

Maternal health is a priority for the Coalition, as the U.S. has a higher rate of maternal mortality than any other developed country. This crisis disproportionately affects people of color, as Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women in the U.S, with the CDC estimating that 60 percent of these deaths are preventable. TRCC is committed to addressing structural racism and the wide range of social determinants that contribute to these devastating disparities. We believe in the right to a healthy pregnancy for every individual.

Resources and Information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) resource page: ["Working Together to Reduce Black Maternal Mortality"](#)
- CDC database: ["Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System"](#)
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): ["Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Data and Analysis Initiative"](#)
- HHS issue brief: ["Medicaid After Pregnancy: State-Level Implications of Extending Postpartum Coverage"](#)
- White House: ["A Proclamation on Black Maternal Health Week, 2021"](#)
- American Heart Association journal article: ["Call to Action: Maternal Health and Saving Mothers: A Policy Statement From the American Heart Association"](#)



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- Health Affairs article: [“Pathways To Equitable And Antiracist Maternal Mental Health Care: Insights From Black Women Stakeholders”](#)
- The Urban Institute report: [“Evidence-Informed and Community-Based Recommendations for Improving Black Maternal Health”](#)
- Association of American Medical Colleges article: [“Addressing maternal health inequities”](#)

The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act

H.R. 3305 - Representative Lauren Underwood (D-IL)

- Introduced on 5/13/23
- 190 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

S. 1606 - Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ)

- Introduced on 5/15/23
- 30 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

Description

- This act is made up of 12 individual bills, each introduced by a member of the [Black Maternal Health Caucus](#), all of which address a wide range of racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes, especially among Black women.
- [Click here](#) to see an overview of each of the bills that make up the Momnibus.

Status: The bills are still under consideration in the House Committees on Energy and Commerce, Education and the Workforce, Veterans' Affairs, Natural Resources, and the Judiciary along with the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

Additional Information

- The Black Maternal Health Caucus: [Momnibus resource page](#)
- Sen. Booker's office press release: [Booker, Underwood, Adams Reintroduce the Bicameral Momnibus Act to End America's Maternal Health Crisis](#)
- Rep. Underwood's office press release: [In Honor of Mother's Day, Underwood, Adams, Booker Reintroduce the Momnibus to End America's Maternal Health Crisis](#)
- The Momnibus is endorsed by more than 200 organizations, listed [here](#). Quotes in support of the legislation can be found [here](#).
- Face the Nation appearance: [Rep. Lauren Underwood says there's a "pathway" for maternal health bills to pass Congress](#)
- President Biden issued [an official proclamation](#) recognizing April 11th through April 17, 2023, as Black Maternal Health Week to raise awareness of the state of Black maternal health in the United States.

Nutrition and Food Security



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Since our founding, the Coalition has advocated that hunger is a health issue, as myriad studies repeatedly show that nutrition-insecure households face higher incidences of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease and consistently have more emergency room visits, hospital admissions and total days in the hospital. Additionally, the cost of hunger to the healthcare industry alone is \$53 billion annually, placing an ever-widening burden on our nation's hospitals, health systems, federally qualified health centers, non-clinical community-based service organizations and citizens. TRCC highlights policies that address the far-reaching human and financial costs of hunger and ensure nutrition security for every family.

Resources and Information

- Feeding America map: [Food Insecurity among Overall \(all ages\) Population in the United States](#)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) resource: [Food access mapping tool](#)
- USDA database: ["Food Security and Nutrition Assistance Statistics"](#)
- Congressional Research Service report: ["Defining Low-Income, Low-Access Food Areas \(Food Deserts\)"](#)
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report: ["More Adequate SNAP Benefits Would Help Millions of Participants Better Afford Food"](#)
- The American Prospect article: ["A Boost in Food Stamps, but Hunger Remains"](#)
- Journal of Patient-Centered Research article: ["The Silence of Food Insecurity: Disconnections Between Primary Care and Community Organizations"](#)
- Journal of Nutrition article: ["Food Insecurity Is Associated with Chronic Disease among Low-Income NHANES Participants"](#)
- American Journal of Managed Care article: ["Food Insecurity, Healthcare Utilization, and High Cost: A Longitudinal Cohort Study"](#)
- Health Services Research journal article: ["Food insecurity, health care utilization, and health care expenditures"](#)
- Association of American Medical Colleges article: ["54 million people in America face food insecurity during the pandemic. It could have dire consequences for their health"](#)

Healthy Meals Help Kids Learn Act of 2023

[H.R. 1259 - Representative Jim McGovern \(D-MA\)](#)

- Introduced on 3/21/23
- 41 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

This bill would:

- Permanently increase the federal reimbursement level for all free, reduced-price, and paid-rate school meals by 45 cents for every lunch served and 28 cents for every breakfast served, with a yearly adjustment.



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- Provide higher reimbursement rates to help address funding challenges, enhance menus, increase access to locally grown food, and support expanded services like afterschool snacks and breakfast in the classroom.

Status: The bill was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Additional Information

- Representative McGovern: [Remarks upon introduction](#)
- Representative McGovern's office: [McGovern Introduces New Bill to Permanently Increase Federal Reimbursement Level for School Meals](#)
- School Nutrition Association memo: [Act Now: Two Key School Nutrition Bills Introduced in Congress](#)

Closing the Meal Gap Act

H.R. 3037 - Representative Alma Adams (D-NC)

- Introduced on 5/2/23
- 82 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

S. 1336 - Senator Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY)

- Introduced on 4/27/23
- 10 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

The bill would:

- Change the formula that determines Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to better account for real costs and need, increasing the baseline of SNAP benefits by about 30 percent.
- Eliminate time limits on benefits as well as the cap on the Excess Shelter Deduction in the SNAP formula to consider the cost of living when calculating benefits.
- Permanently authorize a minimum standard medical deduction in areas with higher costs of living in every state for seniors and disabled individuals applying for benefits
- Eliminate time-limits on benefits for all Americans and would extend SNAP benefits to US territories, Puerto Rico, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands

Status: The bills are still under consideration in the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

Additional Information

- Rep. Adams' office: [One-Pager](#)
- Sen. Gillibrand's office press release: [Senators Gillibrand & Welch, Rep. Velázquez, Anti-Hunger Advocates Introduce Bill To Boost Snap Benefits](#)



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- Rep. Adams' office press release: [Adams, Gillibrand Introduce Landmark Anti-Hunger Legislation](#)
- Sen. Gillibrand press conference: [Announcing the Closing the Meal Gap Act](#)
- Food Research and Action Center (FRAC): [2023 Farm Bill Priorities](#)
- News12 article: [Lawmakers look to expand SNAP benefits in fight against food insecurity](#)

Rural Health

Rural Americans face numerous health disparities compared with their urban counterparts. More than 46 million Americans, or 15 percent of the U.S. population, live in rural areas as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Rural Americans are more likely to die from heart disease, cancer, unintentional injury, chronic lower respiratory disease, and stroke than their urban counterparts. Unintentional injury deaths are approximately 50 percent higher in rural areas than in urban areas, partly due to greater risk of death from motor vehicle crashes and opioid overdoses. In general, residents of rural areas in the United States tend to be older and sicker than their urban counterparts. These challenges highlight the need for additional attention and resources aimed at improving health in rural America. Rural areas could benefit from improved public health programs that support healthier behaviors and neighborhoods, and better access to healthcare services.

Resources and Information

- Rural Health Information Hub: [Online Resource Library](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Office of Rural Health](#)
- National Rural Health Association: [Publications Archive](#)
- Population Health Journal article: [Addressing health inequalities in diverse, rural communities: An unmet need](#)
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services blog: [Addressing Rural Health Inequities in Medicare](#)
- American Heart Association blog: [Call to Action: Rural Health](#)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: [National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report \(NHQDR\)](#)
- American Hospital Association (AHA): [AHA recommends congressional action to improve rural access to care](#)
- AHA resource page: [Rural Advocacy and Policy](#)
- County Health Rankings and Roadmaps report: [What Works? Strategies to Improve Rural Health](#)
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: [Rural Health Resource Page](#)

SPARC (Specialty Physicians Advancing Rural Care) Act

H.R. 2761 - Representative John Joyce (R-PA)

- Introduced on 4/20/23
- 6 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

S. 705 - Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV)

- Introduced on 3/8/23



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- 1 Co-Sponsor as of 8/4/23

This bill would:

- Expand access to healthcare services by addressing the shortage of physicians in rural communities.
- Establish a student loan repayment program to incentivize healthcare specialists to practice in rural and underserved areas. Under this program, any health care provider participating would agree to a 6-year commitment to full-time employment in communities experiencing a shortage of such providers.

Status: The bill was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Additional Information:

- Sen. Rosen's office press release: [Rosen Introduces Package Of Bipartisan Bills To Address Doctor Shortage In Nevada](#)
- American College of Surgeons (ACS): [Support letter](#)
- ACS Memo: [Senate Reintroduces Bills to Support Physician Workforce by Addressing US Student Debt](#)

Payment Models

As our healthcare system continues to innovate ways to incentivize quality over quantity, we must ensure that health disparities and social determinants are addressed if we are to achieve health equity. Years of research have revealed the link between non-medical factors and poor health outcomes. New payment models must be equipped to address the factors that drive high healthcare costs and poor outcomes. This is particularly true among vulnerable populations, who often live with higher rates of chronic disease and less access to health care services. As shared in our 8-point-call-to-action TRCC highlights policies that would help ensure payment to care providers and non-clinical community- based organizations to reduce costs and advance health equity.

Resources and Information

- Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services press release: ["CMS Issues New Roadmap for States to Address the Social Determinants of Health to Improve Outcomes, Lower Costs, Support State Value-Based Care Strategies"](#)
- The American Academy of Family Physicians article: ["Advancing Health Equity: Principles to Address the Social Determinants of Health in Alternative Payment Models"](#)
- Center for Health Care Strategies report: ["Leveraging Value-Based Payment Approaches to Promote Health Equity: Key Strategies for Health Care Payers"](#)



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- Health Affairs article: [“The Case for ACOs: Why Payment Reform Remains Necessary”](#)
- Health Affairs article: [“Health Equity Should Be A Key Value In Value-Based Payment And Delivery Reform”](#)
- Kaiser Family Foundation research: [“Medicaid Authorities and Options to Address Social Determinants of Health \(SDOH\)”](#)

John Lewis Equality in Medicare and Medicaid (EMMT) Act

H.R. 3069 - Representative Terri Sewell (D-AL)

- Introduced on 5/2/23
- 6 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

S. 1296 - Senator Cory Booker (D-MA)

- Introduced on 4/26/23
- 2 Co-Sponsors as of 8/4/23

The bill would:

- Direct the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) to consult with experts on health disparities, such as the Office of Minority Health of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, and the Office on Women’s Health, on developing new payment models that focus not only on lowering costs but also advancing health equity and improving access to care.
- Focus on creating and testing new value-based payment models. Currently, it is not mandated to take into account social determinants of health like a patient’s environment, education, and economic background during the testing and implementation of new payment models.

Status: The bills remain under consideration in the House Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means Committees and the Senate Committee on Finance

Additional Information

- Rep. Sewell’s office press release: [Rep. Sewell and Sen. Booker Introduce Legislation Named for the Late Rep. John Lewis to Advance Health Equity and Access to Care](#)
- Sen. Booker’s office press release: [Booker Reintroduces Legislation to Promote Health Equity and Access to Care](#)
- TRCC recently circulated a [sign-on letter](#) to support Representative Sewell and Senator Booker regarding this legislation