Social and economic conditions such as access to housing, employment, nutrition security, and education have a major influence on individual and community health. These conditions – often referred to as the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) – are receiving increased attention from insurance companies, hospitals, healthcare systems, and governmental agencies interested in improving health outcomes and controlling costs.

While payers and healthcare systems can screen, identify, and make referrals to other organizations for non-medical social needs, they cannot ensure that there are adequate resources and the policies in place to meet the needs of the referred or that resources are equitably utilized. Currently, efforts supported by health care systems are short term – such as temporary housing, nutrition after medical discharge, or transportation – and do not necessarily address the underlying economic and social factors in communities beyond the individual patient.

Public health departments are uniquely situated to gather data from multiple sources, identify gaps in services, build collaborations across sectors, identify non-medical drivers of health in communities, and help address policies that inhibit health.

Both the healthcare and public health sectors are needed to fully address SDOHs: the clinical side can respond to some individual needs, while public health is best suited to meet the needs of a broader population (as well as to prevent unmet needs in the future). The Improving Social Determinants of Health Act of 2023 will increase public health’s capacity to fully address SDOH priorities.
THE BILL WILL AUTHORIZE $100 MILLION PER YEAR FOR THE CDC TO MAINTAIN AND GROW A PROGRAM TO:
- Improve health outcomes and reduce health inequities by coordinating CDC SDOH activities.
- Improve capacity of public health agencies and community-based organizations to address SDOHs.

THE PROGRAM WOULD
- Award grants to state, local, territorial, and Tribal health agencies and organizations to address SDOHs in target communities.
- Award grants to nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education to conduct research on SDOH best practices; provide technical assistance, training, and evaluation assistance to target community grantees; and disseminate best practices.
- Coordinate across CDC to ensure programs consider and incorporate SDOH in grants and activities.
- Coordinate, support, and inform SDOH activities across the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Collect and analyze data related to SDOH activities.

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<td><a href="mailto:Rachel_Fybel@smith.senate.gov">Rachel_Fybel@smith.senate.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARISA SALEMME</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Marisa_Salemme@murphy.senate.gov">Marisa_Salemme@murphy.senate.gov</a></td>
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Madison West, TFAH Associate Government Relations Manager, mwest@tfah.org

Citations:
2 See Social Interventions Research & Evaluation Network (SIREN) at University of California, San Francisco for evidence of effective programs for identifying and addressing social risk in healthcare settings. https://sirenetwork.ucsf.edu