



## HD.2257/SD.1351- An Act to Advance Health Equity: Bill Overview

**Lead Sponsors: Rep. Bud Williams & Rep. Judith Garcia and Sen. Pavel Payano & Sen. Liz Miranda**

### Why is this legislation needed?

The outsized impact of COVID-19 on Black, Latinx, and other communities made it clear that access to health care and health is not equal in the Commonwealth. Early data showed that Black and Latinx residents were 2-3x more likely to get COVID-19 and 3x more likely to have died from it than White and Asian people. For decades, Massachusetts has been a leader in healthcare reform. Addressing racial justice and health equity solutions requires structural solutions, and changes for equity must be incentivized and routine in order to be successful. Just as we were able to lead the nation with landmark health reform in the past, such as universal coverage and promoting cost containment and transparency of health care delivery, we must apply the same innovation, commitment, and collaboration to make equity the next chapter of health reform in the Commonwealth.

### What does this legislation do?

The work to advance health equity is broad and requires shared responsibility across many sectors to address the underlying social, economic, and environmental factors that shape our health. This omnibus bill is a meaningful vehicle for advancing systemic policy changes that will support the fair and just opportunity for all residents of the Commonwealth to live healthy lives. Broadening the foundation for transformational efforts to advance health equity, this legislation proposes the following:

#### **Prioritize Equity in Massachusetts State Government**

- Create a new cabinet-level Executive Office of Equity, to be led by a Secretary of Equity
- Diversify gender and racial and ethnic composition within leadership of key state agencies, boards, and commissions
- Invest in community-defined and led efforts to build healthier communities by addressing the root causes of inequities

#### **Standardize and Report on Data to Advance Health Equity**

- Require the use of standardized health equity data metrics across provider and payer organizations and new accountability mechanisms for reporting the data
- Direct state agencies to report publicly on data to identify disparities and track progress on healthcare equity and social drivers of health in the Commonwealth

#### **Improve Access and Quality of Care**

- Provide full MassHealth coverage for all people who are otherwise eligible, regardless of immigration status, including young people
- Address increasing cost burden of certain medications for chronic conditions that disproportionately affect communities of color and low-income communities
- Require reimbursement parity for telehealth services for primary care and chronic disease management
- Authorize a career ladder program for diverse workers who reflect the communities they serve in safety net hospitals and other community providers
- Require provider organizations to meet or exceed national standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate services and multicultural health care

**For more information, please contact Lindsey Tucker: [ltucker@massleague.org](mailto:ltucker@massleague.org).**

*The **Health Equity Compact** is a coalition of over 50 Black and Latinx leaders who seek to dismantle systemic barriers to equitable health outcomes for all residents of the Commonwealth. Compact members are high-level executives and experts from a diverse set of health, business, labor, and philanthropic organizations, including hospitals, health centers, payers, academic institutions, and public health. Our members are committed to eliminating health inequities as the next chapter of health reform.*