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Sweeping Health Equity Bill Heard at State House

Health system leaders, legislators and community rallied around An Act to Advance Health Equity for Joint Committee on Health Care Financing hearing

Boston, MA (September 22, 2023): The Health Equity Compact’s pivotal legislation, *An Act to Advance Health Equity* ([H.1250](#) / [S.799](#)), was heard on Wednesday, September 20 by the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing at the Massachusetts State House. Health system leaders, legislators and community members gathered for a rally and series of panels in support of the bill.

As health inequities among people of color cost Massachusetts an estimated [\\$5.9 billion](#) annually, *An Act to Advance Health Equity* seeks to dismantle barriers to healthy outcomes and transform the public health landscape of Massachusetts, centering racial justice while posing intersectional, structural and actionable solutions to health disparities.

Legislators, community members and health leaders representing diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, regions and sectors spoke to the profound impact the bill would have on health outcomes and the health system statewide. Panels covered the transformative effects the bill will have on healthcare providers and patient experiences; affordable, culturally competent and accessible care; public and population health priorities; behavioral, oral and optic health integration; unique regional needs; and diverse workforce development.

The bill’s lead sponsors consist of Representative Bud Williams, Representative Judith Garcia, Senator Pavel Payano and Senator Liz Miranda.

"This legislation understands that the burden of centering health equity cannot be on patients or providers alone, but on the system of care in which these inequities have been perpetuated," said **Senator Liz Miranda**. "I believe that alleviating health disparities is achievable. Massachusetts is known to be a leader in this country, so let us take on this challenge to advance our healthcare to ensure it’s done with intentionality, and create a path to saving lives."

Leaders pushed for the bill to be passed as a package to enact enduring progress.

"You now have a bill before you that will support the equity work you requested of the Health Equity Task Force," testified **Michael Curry**, President & CEO of the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. "If you listen to the stories, pay attention to the data, put yourselves in the shoes of those disproportionately impacted dealing with disease – we think that you will also see the urgency of this issue. You will also see that this is simply a matter of life and death."

A rally preceded the hearing on the front steps of the State House, featuring many of the Compact’s members, partners and broader community. Through the gathering, the coalition sought to rally supporters and foster health equity voters, encouraging constituents to support legislators and legislation that prioritize justice in health outcomes and throughout the health system.



Supporters rallied for An Act to Advance Health Equity in front of the Massachusetts State House

The proposed legislation will prioritize health equity in state government, standardize and report on health equity data, and improve access to and quality of care.

Its provisions would:

- Create an Executive Office of Equity, led by a Secretary of Equity
- Diversify leaders of state agencies, boards and commissions are diverse and represent the communities they serve
- Make comprehensive health equity data metrics more accessible to the public
- Address increasing cost burden of medications for chronic conditions that disproportionately affect communities of color and low-income communities
- Create career pathways into the health system for diverse workers who reflect the communities they serve
- Advance culturally and linguistically responsive health services



The Joint Committee on Health Care Financing heard a series of testimonies from health system leaders, legislators, and community members invested in advancing health equity

A recent [public opinion poll from MassInc Polling Group](#) revealed that Massachusetts residents are vastly supportive of the concepts behind the bill's provisions, as well as governmental and industrial involvement in advancing health equity and the foundational principles of health equity as a whole.

An Act to Advance Health Equity marks just one of many steps to achieving just health outcomes in Massachusetts. The Compact will continue advocate for the legislation to be moved favorably out of committee and engage in ongoing advocacy efforts to advance health equity.

About the Health Equity Compact

The Health Equity Compact is a coalition of over 80 leaders of color 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, philanthropic and labor organizations, including hospitals, health centers, payers, academic institutions, and public health. Its mission is to realize bold statewide policy and institutional practice changes that center racial justice and health equity. Its members are committed to eliminating health inequities as the next chapter of health reform. For more information, visit www.healthequitycompact.org/.

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