Health Equity Compact

H.1416/S.901- An Act to Advance Health Equity: What's New for 2025/2026

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

What's New in *An Act to Advance Health Equity* for the 2025-2026 Legislative Session

The Health Equity Compact is continuing to drive systemic policy changes that will help all Massachusetts residents have the fair opportunity to live healthy lives. The refiled bill remains focused on achieving equitable access to health and healthcare in the Commonwealth and introduces new provisions:

- **Statewide health equity benchmarks:** This provision establishes a temporary legislative commission to set measurable benchmarks for addressing longstanding health inequities in Massachusetts. These benchmarks will guide statewide efforts to improve health outcomes. The Commission must also develop a framework to drive and assess state performance, along with recommendations for implementing the benchmarks and framework.
- **Coverage and reimbursement for key services:** The bill mandates reimbursement from MassHealth and commercial payers for community health workers, patient navigation, and interpreter services, to improve access to care and reduce disparities in underserved communities.
- **Medicaid Graduate Medical Education (GME) support:** This provision requires MassHealth to fund GME payments for residency training in fields experiencing shortages, prioritizing placements at community-based settings that serve a high proportion of public payer beneficiaries. This supports healthcare workforce development in high-need areas.

Successes for Health Equity in the 2023-2024 Legislative Session

We are thankful the following important health equity provisions that were included in *An Act to Advance Health Equity* have been signed into law and therefore removed from the refiled bill:

- **Coverage for certain chronic condition medications:** The *Pharmaceutical Access, Costs and Transparency (PACT) Act* lowers out-of-pocket costs and ensures access to lifesaving medications for diabetes, asthma, and certain heart conditions - conditions that disproportionately affect communities of color and low-income communities.
- **Licensure pathway for foreign-trained physicians:** The *Mass Leads Act* establishes a pathway for foreign-trained physicians to obtain licensure in Massachusetts, addressing workforce shortages and supporting equitable access to culturally competent care.
- **Incorporation of health equity into the Department of Public Health's (DPH) Determination of Need (DoN) Process:** *An Act Enhancing the Health Care Market Review Process* now requires DPH to consider health equity as part of the DoN approval process for the construction of a healthcare facility or change in service of a facility.
- **Health equity representative added to the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) Oversight Council:** *An Act Enhancing the Health Care Market Review Process* establishes a new seat on the CHIA Oversight Council for a representative with experience in health equity advocacy.
- **Health Policy Commission grants:** *An Act Enhancing the Health Care Market Review Process* adds "advance health equity" to the list of approved uses for grants provided from the Health Care Payment Reform Trust Fund.

These successes demonstrate significant progress in addressing health inequities that we should be proud of! We celebrate this important progress - and we still have work to do!

For more information, please contact info@healthequitycompact.org or visit healthequitycompact.org

*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, 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.*