

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2024

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

As you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, we write to request the funding inclusion of \$50 million over 3 years to support a Health Equity Innovation Fund as well as language to encourage further partnerships with houses of worship and community organizations to enhance healthcare access for underserved communities within the Committee Report accompanying the Senate FY 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (L-HHS) Appropriations Bill.

The recent pandemic highlighted health disparity challenges and underscored ongoing issues addressing common comorbid and conditions for medically underserved communities. For many individuals and families in these communities, faith-based and community-based organizations have stepped up to fill the void in health information, train and deploy front-line healthcare workers, and facilitate access to care and other services. Much of this community-based intervention is being done on a shoestring budget with few federal resources, but the impact has been tremendous with established infrastructure now functioning through houses of worship and other community venues across the country.

We respectfully request that the L-HHS Subcommittee include the following programmatic funding and report language within the Committee Report accompanying the FY 2024 L-HHS Appropriations Bill:

Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Secretary

Health Equity Innovation Fund — The Committee provides \$50 million to support a Health Equity Innovation Fund within the Secretary's Office and coordinated with the Office of Minority Health. This funding will be available to faith and community-based organizations that created health workforce and health care access programs in hard-to-reach communities with demonstrated results to maintain and enhance this critical infrastructure. Such funding would

ensure the sustainability of this infrastructure and help the local organizations address the underlying health inequities and chronic disease challenges that persist within their respective communities and should be used to support new outreach with less traditional HHS partners to ensure outreach to underserved areas as communities. Further, various HHS agencies that have been supporting innovative activities with faith-based and community-based organizations through various mechanisms are encouraged to utilize additional resources to maintain or enhance these promising activities.

Health Resources and Services Administrations
Health Systems Bureau

Advancing Health Equity with Faith and Community-Based Organizations — The Committee notes the impact of ongoing efforts and local partnerships focused on promoting health equity and addressing health disparities, much of which started during the pandemic. HRSA is encouraged to maintain and advance these promising partnerships with additional available resources to preserve critical healthcare infrastructure providing innovative access through houses of worship and community organizations to ensure continued efforts to address chronic and preventable illness and related drivers of poor health outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and your willingness to engage on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Laphonza Butler
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alex Padilla". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alex" and last name "Padilla" clearly distinguishable.

Alex Padilla

United States Senator