

The National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health

AN ALLIANCE CONVENED BY LEAVITT PARTNERS

November 5, 2018

Mr. Martin J. Vincent
Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Office of the Associate Director for Policy
1600 Clifton Road NE, Mail Stop D-28
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

Dear Mr. Vincent,

On behalf of the National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH), we commend the Surgeon General for his efforts to highlight the importance of community health and vitality through his interest in soliciting comments on the upcoming Surgeon General's Call to Action document, "Community Health and Prosperity." In this letter, we provide an overview of our multi-sectoral alliance efforts to achieve similar goals and provide a few examples of local, successful efforts on the part of our members.

NASDOH is a group of stakeholders working to systematically and pragmatically build a common understanding of the importance of addressing social needs as part of an overall approach to health improvement. We seek to make a material improvement in the health of individuals and communities and, through multi-sector partnerships within the national system of health, advance holistic, value-based, person-centered health care that can successfully impact the social determinants of health. NASDOH brings together health care, public health and social services expertise, local community experience, community-convening competence, business and financial insight, technology innovation, data and analytics competencies, and policy and advocacy acumen to assess and address current regulatory frameworks, funding environments and opportunities, and practical challenges to implementing and sustaining social determinants of health efforts.

We provide a bridge between sectoral efforts by engaging organizations across the national system of health and in particular, engaging the business sector to articulate the cross-sector value proposition for addressing the social determinants of health. We firmly believe that the private sector, including employers and businesses, has an integral role to play through private-sector action, policy work, engaging in public-private partnerships, and civic leadership.

NASDOH has begun work across five key areas of emphasis that clarify the current understanding of the issues, opportunities, and challenges for the health system as it seeks to address underlying social and environmental conditions that impact health. Current focus areas include:

1. Promoting a supportive policy environment at all levels of government and in the private sector;
2. Framing the issue in a way that promotes action;
3. Elevating shared learnings across communities;
4. Leveraging shared approaches to measurement and evaluation; and
5. Encouraging data and technology innovation.

We also seek to highlight opportunities to fill gaps in the evidence, to advance shared learnings from the field, and to inform public and private sector policy makers in their efforts to not only innovate, but also to create sustainable models for addressing the social determinants of health (for more information, see NASDOH's About Us document, two-page Framing document, and white paper attached).

The diversity of the NASDOH membership – spanning business, public health and social services organizations, health plans, health care delivery systems, and others – demonstrates the importance of addressing health across this broad spectrum. Our Alliance has come together around several core principles, many directly relevant to your work at the intersection of health and the economy. These principles include:

1. By addressing the broad and interconnected array of factors that influence health we can effectively help all people and communities to become and stay healthy, achieve well-being, and thrive economically.
2. Strategies that address the social determinants of health should be developed with people and communities and reflect their values, perspectives and preferences.
3. Meaningfully impacting health and well-being requires multi-sectoral partnerships across the private and public sectors.
4. The private sector, including employers and businesses, has an integral role to play through private-sector action, policy work, engaging in public-private partnerships, and civic leadership.
5. Public health departments and human and social services sectors are essential partners in efforts to address the social determinants of health and will need significant financial and human capital investments.
6. Efforts to address the social determinants of health should build upon existing gains in the health care system including ensuring access to affordable, quality care.
7. Successfully transforming to a value-based health care system requires care and payment models that address the social determinants of health.
8. Digital strategies should be leveraged to transform and improve health and well-being including promoting bidirectional information flow with appropriate attention to privacy, proper use, and data security as a priority in data collection, sharing, and use.
9. Measuring the impact of social determinants of health interventions should balance the goals and interests of sectors and affected people and communities.
10. The substantial body of successful evidence-based approaches to better integrate social determinants of health approaches into the health system can inform immediate action; however, there is a continuing need to experiment and build the evidence base, and for policies that encourage the development of additional evidence.

The Alliance applauds your focus on the relationship of health and the economy. Importantly, this relationship works in multiple directions: Research shows that the health of our population is a key factor in our economic vitality and competitiveness, and businesses increasingly recognize that the health of their workforce – and the communities they live in – affects their bottom lines. At the same time, with direct health care spending approaching 20 percent of our GDP (and spending that impacts health considerably more), health is a major engine of economic activity and jobs. As health spending increases and the awareness of economic impact is better understood, we continue to search for achieving value from our investments in health.

We hope that the Surgeon General’s report can emphasize the many facets of this relationship, which are important elements of the work of NASDOH. For example:

- As payers of many health bills, businesses have an increasing role, and responsibility, in the evolution of health spending toward achieving greater value. This includes addressing social needs of patients and addressing social and economic determinants of health more broadly.
- Businesses have an important role in addressing health in the communities in which they operate, including leadership in policies and practices that improve health.
- Health care providers and insurers are working with business and government on innovative approaches to addressing value in health, including addressing social determinants of health. These are driven by economic realities and can be facilitated by Federal policies that encourage innovation and generate evidence that can be used in advancing value-based health investments.
- Health care institutions are often among the largest employers in communities, often described as “anchor institutions.” Working across sectors with businesses, public health and social services agencies, and others they are playing an increasingly constructive role in addressing community-wide factors that help determine the population’s health.

NASDOH members are actively engaged in developing promising practices that address how the public and private sector are working collaboratively at the local, individual and community health levels. We provide some salient examples from our NASDOH members here:

General Electric believes there exists critical commercial value and new business models around improving social needs and addressing the larger social determinants of health. The GE HealthyCities has continued to show improved health and well-being in communities throughout the US. In Cincinnati, an evaluation of their program showed a reduction in hospital admissions, reduction in ER visits, and reduction in childhood asthma rates 24 months after implementation leading to improved health outcomes for Cincinnati and reduced health care costs for GE.

The **Michigan Health Improvement Alliance (MiHIA)** is a multi-stakeholder, community collaboration with the aim to take action and drive system change that effectively advances health. MiHIA's Regional Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) has achieved the goal of preventing or delaying the onset of Type 2 Diabetes while providing very significant health care cost savings. The program model utilizes broad screening to identify and enroll eligible individuals and facilitate reducing risk factors of diabetes. In developing the regional programming, utilizing the CDC recommended model, MiHIA engaged federal agencies, community-based organizations, employers, insurers, health care professionals, academia, and other stakeholders for the support of this program. With MiHIA committed to sustainable system level change, the DPP initiative required broadly transforming the health ecosystem to create new norms which included: achieving an understanding and urgency of the provider community; utilizing new referral and scheduling systems, and convincing payers to make DPP benefits reimbursable. In just two years after implementation, the program enrolled 483 individuals, resulted in over \$1.1 million in current health care savings, with a predicted \$3.2 million in health plan savings annually going forward. Additionally, over 128,000 individuals were enrolled in a health insurance plan that added DPP as a covered benefit.

Intermountain Healthcare recently announced a new initiative, the Utah Alliance for Determinants of Health, with a goal of improving health in the communities that they serve by focusing on non-medical factors that affect health, such as housing stability, utility needs, food insecurity, interpersonal violence, and transportation. The Utah Alliance for Determinants of Health is a partnership between Intermountain Healthcare, the State of Utah, local governments, and other community organizations. The collaboration will implement two demonstration programs in Ogden and St. George with SelectHealth Medicaid members and will work towards achieving healthier communities, lower health care costs, and be an example for other communities in the U.S.

Aetna is piloting an innovative partnership with Meals on Wheels in select markets around the country. In the pilot program, Meals on Wheels volunteers deliver hot meals five days per week for 6 months to a select group of chronically ill and homebound Medicare Advantage beneficiaries. While the meal itself is an important feature of the program, the partnership is actually intended to drive a more comprehensive understanding of these members overall life needs. During the meal delivery, volunteers may discover any number of social and clinical needs that these individuals have. By using an application on their phones or tablets, these trained volunteers can send a "signal" to a Meals on Wheels care coordinator who can then address the needs if they are social in nature (e.g., member needs a ride, has to address a home issue, needs more connection to community services). If the member needs a clinical intervention, the Aetna care coordinator handles the outreach to arrange the right care for the patient. The intent is to identify opportunities to address member needs up stream in order to improve health outcomes, reduce costs, and drive an overall improved quality of life.

The **de Beaumont Foundation** supported BUILD Health Challenge focuses on multisector, community-driven partnerships to reduce health disparities caused by social inequity. The Healthy Homes Des Moines (HHDSM) initiative worked on reducing pediatric asthma-related hospital visits through improving social, economic, and environmental factors with the greatest impact on asthma. The goal of the initiative was to improve housing, health education, and indoor air quality, while promoting self-care and lifestyle changes. The approach included a four-step process beginning with referrals by examining patient and housing data. Referrals were made by hospitals, emergency rooms, clinics, and school nurses' offices. Next, a home inspector identified asthma triggers in each child's home which was followed by contractors making home repairs. Finally, community health workers

conducted education programs for participants on how to control asthma symptoms. The initiative provided 62 families in-home asthma education, 42 homes were repaired including \$150,000 worth of repairs, 38 families completed all intervention steps, \$17,000 in supplies were given to families, and 6.2 more asthma-free days per month for children was achieved.

RWJBarnabas Health is at the forefront of ensuring a movement from merely implementing basic community-level involvement and benefit projects to implementing policies, procedures, structures, and resources that drive positive social change as a core component to its system operations. Recognizing the need to expand access to fresh, healthy and affordable food to all community members, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center (NBIMC) established a greenhouse and farmers market – and recently became New Jersey’s first hospital-based vendor to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The greenhouse provides more than 5,000 pounds of fresh fruit and produce to an area in Newark designated as a food desert, and produce grown in the greenhouse is sold at a weekly farmer’s market located in NBIMC’s lobby. The Beth Greenhouse format will be replicated across the RWJBarnabas Health system at other key sites where access to nutritious, affordable food is a community need.

Additionally, RWJBarnabas Health, in partnership with **Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ**, has co-funded Community Health Workers (CHWs) into Newark-based care teams in 4 identified zip codes to improve health outcomes and reduce total cost of care. Addressing social determinants of health is fundamental to that work and the success of this piloted program.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide NASDOH’s views, recommendations, and promising models on how private sector investment in communities can improve health and prosperity. We are happy to discuss any of the information outlined above or provide further assistance that would be valuable. For more information on NASDOH, please visit our website at www.nasdoh.org and see our documents attached.

Sincerely,



Vince Ventimiglia
President, Leavitt Partners Collaborative Advocates and Advisor to NASDOH