



## The AHEAD Act

**Rep. David Trone (MD-06) and Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD)**

### The Problem

Policies on a wide range of issues, like education, safe environments, housing, transportation, economic development, and access to nutritious foods can have a strong impact on population health and health disparities. These social determinants of health contribute to disparities throughout the U.S.; about one in ten Americans lives in poverty and is unable to afford necessities like healthy foods, healthcare, and adequate housing.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. also has stark health disparities by race and ethnicity. Compared to white Americans, the life expectancy for Black Americans is lower by six years and the death rate is generally higher for heart disease, stroke, cancer, asthma, pneumonia, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and homicide.<sup>2,3</sup> Residents of rural areas are more likely to experience poverty, face limited options for public transportation and physical activity, and have fewer sources of healthy food.<sup>4</sup>

### What does *The AHEAD Act* do?

*The Assessing Health Evaluations to Advance Decision-making (AHEAD) Act* would evaluate the use of tools that assess a policy's impact on population health and well-being. This bill will direct the Department of Health and Human Services to commission the National Academies to study how to incorporate health impact assessments and other timely, evidence-based analysis tools into our federal policymaking process. These tools could be used to measure the impacts of legislation - including legislation on non-healthcare issues - on population health and health disparities. Evaluating the health impact of policies on a range of social determinants of health before legislation is enacted can improve health, reduce disparities, and lead to cost-savings.

### Support for *The AHEAD Act*

American Public Health Association, Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Friends of NIMHD, National Alliance against Disparities in Patient Health, National Hispanic Medical Association, Population Health Alliance, National Rural Health Association, and the Maryland Hospital Association

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<sup>1</sup> <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.kff.org/report-section/key-facts-on-health-and-health-care-by-race-and-ethnicity-health-status-outcomes-and-behaviors/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=64>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/social-determinants-of-health>