

Federal Minority Health Legislation Introduced in 2009

S. 319 – “Community Health Workers Act of 2009” (Introduced January 2009) – This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to award grants to States or local or tribal units to develop community health worker programs to promote positive health behaviors for women and children in target populations, especially racial and ethnic minority women and children in medically underserved communities. The funding will be used to train and support community health workers to provide education about prevalent health problems, learning opportunities about behavioral risk factors (physical inactivity, nutrition, tobacco use, etc.), information about how to obtain health insurance, and referrals to community-based programs for health care services. [*Sen. Jeff Bingaman (NM)*]

S. 497 – “Nurse Education, Expansion, and Development Act of 2009” (Introduced February 2009) – This bill requires the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to award grants to schools of nursing to increase the number of nursing faculty and students. Schools that are awarded grants must comply with certain requirements and must implement a plan to meet specific accomplishments, which could include increasing the enrollment of minority and diverse students. [*Sen. Richard Durbin (IL)*]

H.R. 1995 – “Eliminating Disparities in Diabetes Prevention Access and Care Act of 2009” (Introduced April 2009) – The purpose of this bill is to promote and improve the care of individuals with diabetes, and to reduce health disparities, relating to diabetes, within racial and ethnic minority groups. The bill requires several federal agencies to conduct, expand, and support diabetes research in minority populations. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) must provide grant funding to encourage participation in diabetes-focused health fields, such as weight counseling, obesity research, and nutrition. CDC must expand on activities relating to diabetes in minority populations, including providing culturally appropriate diabetes health promotion and prevention programs for minority populations. HHS must conduct and support programs to educate health professionals on the causes and effects of diabetes in minority populations. The bill also requires reporting on all Federal activities and programs related to diabetes in minority populations. [*Rep. Diana DeGette (CO)*]

H.R. 2233 – “Health Empowerment Zone Act of 2009” (Introduced May 2009) – This bill authorizes the Secretary of HHS to designate health empowerment zones (at least one in each state and the District of Columbia), defined as areas in which one or more communities experience disproportionate disparities in health care and health status. This determination will be based on an evaluation of data from numerous health-related areas, including cancer, diabetes, environmental health, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, respiratory disease, and tobacco use. Eligible community partnerships (communities in the area, organizations and institutions with a history of working in these communities) may apply for their communities to be designated as “health empowerment zones”. A community partnerships request must include a vision and set of goals for the area, and a strategic plan for implementing the goals. The Secretary of HHS shall provide grants to the community partnerships in the health empowerment zones to implement their strategic plans. [*Rep. Donna Christensen (VI)*]

The following is a list of some Congressional websites to track pending minority health legislation and health care bills and issues at the federal level:

Senator Jeff Bingaman's section of his website on health care, providing information on health care legislation and news, including health disparities:

<http://bingaman.senate.gov/policy/issues/health.cfm>

Senator Richard Durbin's page on Health and Wellness:

<http://durbin.senate.gov/issues/health.cfm>

Senator Edward Kennedy's page on Health Care:

http://kennedy.senate.gov/issues_and_agenda/ , then click on "Health Care".

Congresswoman Donna Christensen's website on the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust: <http://www.donnachristensen.house.gov/SinglePage.aspx?NewsID=1256>

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions (HELP) website. The HELP Committee's jurisdiction covers public health statutes, insurance statutes, and most of the agencies, institutes, and programs of the Department of Health and Human Services.

<http://help.senate.gov/>

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce website (including the Subcommittee on Health). The Subcommittee on Health has jurisdiction over public health, hospital construction, biomedical programs, Medicaid, national health insurance, food and drugs, and drug abuse.

<http://energycommerce.house.gov/>

Federal Minority Health Offices and Centers

HHS Office of Minority Health

<http://www.omhrc.gov/>

CDC Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

<http://www.cdc.gov/omhd/>

National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities

<http://ncmhd.nih.gov/>

Prepared by:
Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
201 West Preston Street, Room 500
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
www.mdhealthdisparities.org