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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE BILL

No. 1267 Session of  
2022

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INTRODUCED BY HAYWOOD, FONTANA, CAPPELLETTI, COMMITTA AND HUGHES,  
JUNE 3, 2022

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REFERRED TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, JUNE 3, 2022

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AN ACT

1 Establishing the Office of Health Equity and the Office of  
2 Health Equity Advisory Committee; and imposing duties on the  
3 Department of Health.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Office of  
8 Health Equity Act.

9 Section 2. Definitions.

10 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
11 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
12 context clearly indicates otherwise:

13 "Advisory committee." The Office of Health Equity Advisory  
14 Committee established under section 4.

15 "Department." The Department of Health of the Commonwealth.

16 "Health disparities." Preventable differences in the burden  
17 of disease, injury or violence or in opportunities to achieve  
18 optimal health that are experienced by a population in

1 comparison with another population.

2 "Health equity." As follows:

3 (1) The attainment of the highest level of health for  
4 all people.

5 (2) The achievement of health equity requires valuing  
6 everyone equally, with focused and ongoing societal efforts  
7 to address avoidable inequalities and historical and  
8 contemporary injustices, and to eliminate health and health  
9 care disparities.

10 "Office." The Office of Health Equity established under  
11 section 3.

12 "Secretary." The Secretary of Health of the Commonwealth.  
13 Section 3. Office of Health Equity.

14 (a) Establishment.--The Office of Health Equity is  
15 established within the department. At a minimum, the office  
16 shall include a director and appropriate staff.

17 (b) Powers and duties.--The office shall have the following  
18 powers and duties, without limitation:

19 (1) Providing leadership to increase public awareness of  
20 health disparities in this Commonwealth.

21 (2) Advocating for the development of programs to  
22 address health disparities in this Commonwealth and provide  
23 health equity.

24 (3) Working with policymakers, insurers, health care  
25 providers and communities to implement policies and programs  
26 that result in a measurable and sustained improvement in the  
27 health status of underserved and disparate populations in  
28 this Commonwealth.

29 (4) Collaborating with State agencies, academic  
30 institutions, community-based organizations, health partners,

1 health care providers and others in the public and private  
2 sectors to address health disparities in this Commonwealth.

3 (c) Reports.--

4 (1) No later than March 31 of each year, the office  
5 shall prepare and distribute an annual report on the status  
6 of health disparities in this Commonwealth for the preceding  
7 calendar year, with recommendations to eliminate health  
8 disparities in this Commonwealth.

9 (2) The office shall transmit copies of each annual  
10 report under this subsection to:

11 (i) The President pro tempore of the Senate.

12 (ii) The Speaker of the House of Representatives.

13 (iii) The Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the  
14 Senate.

15 (iv) The Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the  
16 House of Representatives.

17 (v) The chairperson and minority chairperson of the  
18 Health and Human Services Committee of the Senate.

19 (vi) The chairperson and minority chairperson of the  
20 Health Committee of the House of Representatives.

21 (vii) The chairperson and minority chairperson of  
22 the Human Services Committee of the House of  
23 Representatives.

24 (3) Each annual report under this subsection shall be  
25 posted on the department's publicly accessible Internet  
26 website.

27 Section 4. Office of Health Equity Advisory Committee.

28 (a) Establishment.--The Office of Health Equity Advisory  
29 Committee is established within the office.

30 (b) Membership.--The membership of the advisory committee

1 shall be at the discretion of the secretary but shall, at a  
2 minimum, include representatives of academia, the provider  
3 community and the faith-based community and organized  
4 representatives of disparate populations within this  
5 Commonwealth.

6 (c) Powers and duties.--The advisory committee shall have  
7 the following powers and duties, without limitation:

8 (1) Advising the secretary on matters concerning health  
9 disparities in this Commonwealth and recommending actions  
10 that are data-driven, evidence-based and culturally aware.

11 (2) Increasing public awareness of the existence of  
12 health disparities in this Commonwealth.

13 (3) Mobilizing Statewide, community and individual  
14 actions to eliminate health disparities in this Commonwealth.

15 (4) Assisting in the identification of Federal and  
16 private foundation funding to support programs to address  
17 health disparities in this Commonwealth.

18 (5) Assisting in the identification of the conditions  
19 and causes of health disparities in this Commonwealth and  
20 prioritizing strategies to address the elimination of health  
21 disparities.

22 (6) Enhancing the coordination and support of existing  
23 Commonwealth programs, including:

24 (i) Identifying evidence-based practices and  
25 providing advice and guidance on public and private  
26 resources.

27 (ii) Disseminating information on programs to reduce  
28 and eliminate identified health disparities.

29 (iii) Utilizing assessment tools to improve cultural  
30 competency of health care providers.

1           (7) Providing advice and guidance to the Governor  
2 through the office and the secretary on programs and  
3 activities to accelerate the elimination of health  
4 disparities in the delivery of health care in this  
5 Commonwealth.

6 Section 5. Cooperation.

7       Each department, agency, office, authority, board, commission  
8 or similar governmental entity under the jurisdiction of the  
9 Governor shall cooperate with the office to support and promote  
10 the mission and goals of the office.

11 Section 6. Powers and duties of department.

12       The department shall promulgate any rules, regulations or  
13 policies necessary to implement this act.

14 Section 7. Effective date.

15       This act shall take effect immediately.