
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 731 Session of
2023

INTRODUCED BY HAYWOOD, SANTARSIERO, KEARNEY, DILLON, HUGHES,
FONTANA, TARTAGLIONE, KANE, COSTA AND CAPPELLETTI,
JUNE 2, 2023

REFERRED TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, JUNE 2, 2023

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.