

Bill works to eliminate racial and ethnic health and health care disparities and increases access to quality health care

Washington, DC - The National Health Law Program welcomes the introduction of The Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2011 (HEAA). The bill was introduced by the Congressional Tri-Caucus - Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Congressional Black Caucus, and Congressional Hispanic Caucus - and was spearheaded by Rep. Barbara Lee, along with Rep. Donna Christensen, and Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard. HEAA complements the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the health equity efforts currently being implemented by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The ACA, which was passed last year, marked the biggest expansion of Medicaid since its inception in 1965 by expanding Medicaid eligibility and coverage to over 16 million people-including adults without dependent children - with incomes up to 133% of the federal poverty line. The ACA also established a foundation for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in our health and health care system. HEAA builds upon the strengths of the ACA and provides the additional tools necessary to address and eliminate health and health care disparities experienced by minority and underserved communities.

"The Affordable Care Act is improving the lives of millions of Americans by providing access to quality health care coverage," said Emily Spitzer, executive director of NHeLP. "The Health Equity and Accountability Act is the next step toward ensuring that the ACA continues to improve health equity. The Act reflects NHeLP's commitment to eliminating racial and ethnic barriers to quality health and health care."

HEAA works to eliminate existing access barriers to affordable health insurance coverage, to promote investments in innovative health delivery methods and technologies, and to advance research and data collection about the health needs and outcomes of our communities. The bill also ensures that a full range of culturally and linguistically appropriate health care and public health services are available and accessible in every community, creates a pipeline and new training opportunities for minority-serving professional and allied health care workers, and incorporates strategies to address a range of disease-specific, mental and behavioral health

issues facing minority communities.

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Founded in 1969, the National Health Law Program works with and on behalf of limited-income people, people with disabilities, and children to improve their access to quality health care and to enforce their legal rights to health. NHeLP works with courts, government agencies, and Congress to ensure quality health care for the most vulnerable members of our society.

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