

Families USA: Joins diverse partners in launching health equity task force to leverage health system reform to address persistent health disparities

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Washington, D.C. – At its annual Health Action conference on January 26, Families USA, together with partner health equity, civil rights, and consumer health organizations, announced the creation of the Health Equity Task Force for Delivery and Payment Transformation. This first-of-its-kind Task Force brings together leading experts and organizations with the goal of developing a policy agenda and recommendations to address persistent racial, ethnic, and geographic disparities and advance health equity in delivery and payment reform efforts at the state and national levels.

“As a first-generation Latino American from an immigrant family and working with immigrant families, I know firsthand the access barriers and quality inequities that people of color face when accessing health care services,” said Frederick Isasi, executive director of Families USA. “Amidst current efforts to improve health care and pay for value, the voices of long-disenfranchised communities have been largely absent. It is critical that communities of color and other disadvantaged communities are engaged in system transformation efforts to ensure that as we transform our health care system, we are able to improve their health and well-being and, importantly, that we do not make health inequities even worse. Families USA is honored to partner with this outstanding group of health equity leaders from

across the country in launching the Task Force and working to prioritize health equity in system transformation.”

The Task Force seeks to create and advance a common policy agenda that identifies specific health care delivery models and interventions that have the potential to effectively narrow persistent health and health care disparities and the payment structures needed to support them. It also will identify interventions and policies that may inadvertently exacerbate disparities.

“Health care payment and delivery reform efforts often have not benefited disadvantaged communities because they have not been designed with their specific needs and challenges in mind, and that includes communities of color, rural communities, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities,” said Sinsi Hernández-Cancio, the Director of Health Equity at Families USA and leading work on the Task Force. “As our nation becomes increasingly diverse, our health care system must evolve to provide efficient, effective, high quality care for everyone. That is why the Task Force includes members that represent diverse constituencies which collectively have decades of experience representing communities that have long struggled with entrenched health and health care disparities.”

Dr. Marjorie Innocent, Senior Director of Health Programs for the NAACP and a member of the Task Force added, “As we continue to advance our nation’s health and reform our health care system toward better outcomes and greater efficiency, it is crucial that we not lose sight of eliminating health disparities in the process. We must achieve a health care system that works smartly and equitably to support optimal health for all. A healthy nation is a ready nation – and this Task Force is about optimizing health and readiness for all in our country.”

The founding members of the Task Force include Dr. Marshall Chin of Finding Answers: Disparities Research for Change; Dr. Joseph Betancourt of the Disparities Solution Center; Dr. Marjorie Innocent of NAACP; Steven López of UnidosUS; Nimaako Brown of the National Urban League; Ben D’Avanzo of the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum; Ann Marie Benitez of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health; Barbara Kornblau of the Coalition for Disability Health Equity; Leena Sharma of Community Catalyst; James Albino of Atlas Research; Daniel Dawes of the Health Equity and Leadership and Exchange Network; Charlie Alfero of the Southwest Center for Health Innovation; Dr. Tekisha Everette of Health Equity Solutions; Sarah de Guia of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network; Deborah Riddick; Wandy Hernandez of HealthConnect One; former

Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin of the Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic and Ignatius Bau.

The Task Force is continuing to recruit members to ensure strong representation of diverse communities and develop a national network of health equity and health care transformation leaders. It is planning to release a policy agenda in the spring that is focused on advancing health equity through delivery and payment reform which can serve as a blueprint for stakeholders and community leaders across the nation.