H.R.6637 Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2020

**Issue:** Kidney disease has a disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic Americans. Black Americans make up about 13% of the population, but over 35% of the people on dialysis. Hispanics are almost 1.3 times more likely to get kidney disease than non-Hispanics. Communities of color have also been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The current pandemic illustrates how health and socioeconomic disparities result in negative health outcomes for racial and ethnic minority populations.

These health and socioeconomic disparities include, but are not limited to, having less access to health insurance and health care; living in neighborhoods with more pollution and less access to healthy food, which contribute to chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Communities of color also encounter bias in the health care system that results in inadequate and lower quality of care. All of these are contributing factors that make racial and ethnic minorities more vulnerable to chronic illnesses, resulting in higher fatalities during the pandemic.

**Request: Please cosponsor H.R.6637, Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2020**

The Health Equity and Accountability Act is a comprehensive bill that aims to ensure that at-risk populations have access to the health care they need. It covers a wide variety of the root causes and possible ways to close the gap in health outcomes in minority populations in the U.S. It provides funds to study why certain diseases affect communities of color at higher rates; finances the training of future physicians, nurses and other health professionals from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds; and supports resources for educating the current workforce on culturally and linguistically appropriate health services.

The bill also addresses high-impact diseases in minority communities, such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and now kidney disease as well. In order to assist kidney patients, this bill would

- Requires increased research into kidney disease in minority populations and the inclusion of minority participants in clinical trials.
- Develops an action plan from the NIH around public health strategies, prevention, diagnosis, disease management, and awareness of kidney disease. The development of this plan would include participation from patients, caregivers, and health professionals, among others.
- Requires the NIH to develop a national action plan to increase access to home dialysis.
- Supports and expands research into kidney transplant rates in minority populations.
- Supports research into the environmental and occupational causes that contribute to kidney disease to inform development of public health strategies to lessen the impact of these causes.
- Conducts a study on treatment patterns by insurance type (Medicare, Medicaid, private insurers) in minority populations and examines how these impact access to care.
- Adds dialysis to the definition of primary care services, which would increase access to care in underserved areas.

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