

COVID Community Care Act

The *COVID Community Care Act* provides emergency funding for community organizations in medically underserved communities to take action as part of the larger public health effort to contain COVID-19.

The Problem

In every public health crisis, success depends on the willingness of people to trust the health information they are getting. This is particularly true of communities that are medically underserved or suffer from health disparities.

From the beginning of this pandemic, Black and Brown people in the United States have suffered the largest burden of illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Black, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native people are being [hospitalized with COVID-19 at higher rates](#) and are [dying from COVID-19 at younger ages](#).

Contact tracing, testing, public communication, and vaccination are some of the most effective tools we have for slowing the spread of COVID-19, but they require trust between health care workers and communities. A legacy of discrimination in our health care has created mistrust among Black and Brown people—mistrust so prevalent that it has been [documented by the National Institutes of Health](#).

The COVID Community Care Act

The *COVID Community Care Act* empowers trusted organizations in medically underserved communities to address mistrust, communicate timely information, and provide services to combat COVID-19. It provides grants for community-based organizations and non-profits to conduct testing, tracing, vaccination services, and outreach activities in communities with higher rates of COVID-19, a high percentage of minority residents, or who have historically lacked access to the health care system. The bill requires that persons hired to conduct engagement have experience and relationships with the people living in the communities they serve.

The December *Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021* included \$2.8 billion for testing, contact tracing, and vaccines for communities of color and medically underserved communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. The *COVID Community Care Act* builds on that effort by ensuring that community-based organizations and non-profits in medically underserved communities can play a supporting role in reaching communities that public health agencies have difficulty engaging.

The House bill (H.R. 8192 in the 116th Congress) was introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), and Rep. Robin L. Kelly (D-IL), and cosponsored by more than 30 of their colleagues.

The *COVID Community Care Act* has been endorsed by the National Minority Quality Forum, National Hispanic Medical Association, Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, National Indian Health Board, Partners in Health, SEIU, National Women's Law Center, Justice in Aging, National Immigration Law Center, UnidosUS, Public Health Institute, Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.