



May 12, 2020

### **An Open Letter to Gov. Tom Wolf and Lt. Gov. John Fetterman**

Challenging times often pave the way for a better tomorrow. On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians (PAFP), thank you for your response to the COVID-19 pandemic and your efforts to study its impact on vulnerable populations. To focus these efforts, we encourage you to adopt by executive order a “Health in All Policies” (HiAP) strategy to address social determinants of health and health disparities in the Commonwealth beyond COVID-19 and cement an innovative approach to health leadership for the future of Pennsylvania.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Office of Policy and Strategy states: “HiAP recognizes that health is created by a multitude of factors beyond healthcare and, in many cases, beyond the scope of traditional public health activities. The HiAP approach may also be effective in identifying gaps in evidence and achieving health equity.”

This pandemic has presented many medical, socio-economic and public policy challenges and highlighted existing health inequality in Pennsylvania. We now know that people with underlying health conditions are most vulnerable to severe illness from COVID-19, and social determinants of health are key indicators for contracting the deadly virus.

Across Pennsylvania, our most vulnerable citizens continue to carry the burden of elevated risk, yet we lag behind in tracking related data. Nearly 72 percent of the 3,731 deaths in our Commonwealth currently attributed to COVID-19 are among nursing home residents. Data is less clear with respect to race and socioeconomic status as 63 percent of all statewide COVID-19 deaths reported have no race attributed. While COVID-19 did not cause these disparities, it has certainly highlighted them. They will persist even as we recover from this health crisis.

We applauded the announcement on Wednesday, April 17, that Gov. Tom Wolf and Lt. Gov. John Fetterman will convene a [COVID-19 Response Task Force for Health Disparity](#) to help identify the effects of the pandemic on the state’s minority and vulnerable populations. The Health Disparity Task Force, led by Lt. Gov. Fetterman, will prepare recommendations for the governor to address the short and long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the state’s minority and vulnerable communities. We believe the COVID-19 Response Task Force for Health Disparity should advance a HiAP strategy in Pennsylvania as part of their recommendations.

The PAFP has drafted a Pennsylvania-specific executive order framework for your consideration – with specific detail to our state’s administrative structure – to assist our Commonwealth in developing the most effective and achievable means for improving health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Tracey Conti, MD  
President



## Executive Order

Developed by the PAFP Health in All Policies Task Force

WHEREAS, advancing the health of all Pennsylvanians is critical to sustaining a strong and economically vibrant Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, health outcomes can be largely attributed to a wide range of external factors apart from a person's health care, which only accounts for 10% of a person's health and assumes 96% of health expenditures in the US; and

WHEREAS, a person's zip code is often a predictor of health, with many Pennsylvanians not living or working in communities that were designed with health in mind; and

WHEREAS, health outcomes, such as differences in life expectancy by race and ethnicity, are the result of a confluence of social, environmental, and behavioral factors simultaneously operating at different scales; and

WHEREAS, these complex issues rarely have a singular solution that can be implemented by one sector or government agency; and

WHEREAS, integration of health impacts into state public policies, including those related to health care and public health, air and water quality, natural resources, housing, infrastructure, education, and transportation can have a substantial impact on the health and economic prosperity of communities; and

WHEREAS, improving health outcomes with reduction of chronic disease burden and reducing health inequities in Pennsylvania requires interagency collaboration to ensure health is considered when policies are developed.

THEREFORE, I, Tom Wolf, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby establish the Health in All Policies (HiAP) Task Force.

I. Composition and Charge

The Health in All Policies Task Force (HiAP) shall identify strategies to influence policy development to ensure that health impacts are considered with input from interagency collaboration.



The Task Force shall be chaired by the Secretary of Human Services in conjunction with the Governor's Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs, and shall work with representatives from the following state agencies and departments:

1. Attorney General
2. Department of Agriculture
3. Department of Community and Economic Development
4. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
5. Department of Corrections
6. Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
7. Department of Education
8. Department of Environmental Protection
9. Department of General Services
10. Department of Human Services
11. Department of Labor and Industry
12. Department of Revenue
13. Department of State
14. Department of Transportation
15. Public Utilities Commission

The Task Force shall also include a member from each of the four legislative caucuses of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, to be appointed by their respective leaders.

In addition, the Task Force shall include representatives from the following organizations and may seek members from any other entities identified by the Task Force (such as sectors of the medical community, community advocacy representatives, social services professionals, redevelopment authorities, and environmental organizations):

1. Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians
2. Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
3. Pennsylvania Chapter of the American College of Physicians
4. Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers
5. Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners
6. United Way of Pennsylvania
7. Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania

The Task Force shall develop a work plan for integrating health into policy decisions, specifically developing a roadmap that includes essential key strategies:



1. Develop and structure cross-sector relationships
2. Enhance workforce capacity
3. Incorporate health into decision-making processes
4. Coordinate funding and investments
5. Integrate research, evaluation, and data systems
6. Implement accountability structures
7. Synchronize communications and messaging

In developing this work plan, the Task Force may review existing state efforts, consider best/promising practices used by other jurisdictions and agencies, and propose formal action plans for recommended programs, policies, and strategies.

The Task Force shall develop guidance, criteria, and tools to support all branches of government in assessing potential impact on health when proposing new agency rules, budgetary changes, or major programmatic changes.

The Task Force shall issue a report to the Governor within one year of the effective date of this executive order that includes a strategic plan, goals, and enabling strategies, and thereafter provide semiannual reports on progress and achievements until otherwise directed.

II. Effective Date

This executive order shall take effect upon signing.