

October 14, 2021

The Honorable Cheri Bustos
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
2207 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable G.K. Butterfield
2080 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
2421 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3602

Dear Representatives Bustos, Cole, Butterfield, and Mullin:

On behalf of The Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation, one of the nation's largest charities, I am writing to express our support for the *Social Determinants Accelerator Act* (H.R. 2503). We thank you for your leadership for introducing this bill and appreciate your leadership on the bipartisan Congressional Social Determinants of Health Caucus to highlight opportunities for coordination across programs, to improve health outcomes, and to maximize existing and future federal investments in health, food, housing, transportation, and other important drivers of health. In addition, we offer ourselves as a resource to you as we have seventeen years of experience in serving low-income Americans through our programs.

The PAN Foundation helps underinsured people with life-threatening, chronic and rare diseases get the medications and treatments they need by assisting with their out-of-pocket costs and advocating for improved access and affordability. Since 2004, we have helped more than one million people, most of whom are patients over the age of 65. At PAN, we recognize that in addition to lack of financial resources, other social determinants of health (SDOH) can greatly impact one's ability to begin and stay on treatment.

PAN is committed to addressing the SDOH concerns that are voiced by our patients and appreciates Congress' growing interest in this area. In fact, PAN's Board of Directors has committed to the following statement: "Public and private insurers should adopt policies that mitigate barriers to treatment. Addressing social determinants has the potential to improve patient health outcomes and reduce avoidable healthcare spending."

In the Fall of 2019, we [surveyed](#) our patients to better understand their SDOH concerns. A key finding of the survey was that 3 out of 4 patients indicated that it was "very hard" or "somewhat hard" to pay for their basic needs, such as food, housing, doctor's visits, transportation, and heating. In response to these results, the PAN Foundation created a survey tool with strategic screening questions about SDOH. This tool is available to all patient support organizations, to help better understand and assist their patient communities. We recognize that technology can play a critical role to connect patients with existing resources, either at the community, state, or national level.

In addition, we have seen the impact that lack of transportation services can have on one's ability to visit a health care provider or even go to the pharmacy to pick up a prescription. Accordingly, in 2020, we launched a transportation program to help the patients we support who are below 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, PAN launched a COVID-19 Financial Support Fund to help affected patients at or below 400% FPL cope with unprecedented financial stress. Over a 17-month period, more than 6,800 patients received a \$300 pre-paid debit card making nearly 90,000 transactions. Of these, 66% of transactions were used the card to address food insecurity, and 17% of transactions were used to address transportation. The remaining transactions addressed other needs such as: telehealth copays, prescription medications, medical equipment, and supplies.

Congress can and should encourage federal agencies and departments to collaborate and establish key SDOH goals to implement by 2030. Additionally, Congress can encourage state and local public health agencies to collaborate, and work with the private sector more closely through programs funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We also encourage Congress to provide resources for pilot programs that leverage technology to connect patients with resources that match both their social and health needs.

The PAN Foundation is eager to be an active partner. Our work with more than one million patients since 2004 has illustrated to us that adherence to treatment is complicated. Lack of financial assistance and other factors such as transportation, food insecurity and concerns about one's ability to pay rent, can contribute to a patient's ability to access and afford their care. We welcome being a partner – contributing our expertise, assisting with technology, as well as marketing and patient/provider education.

Again we laud you for leadership and your important work to address the social needs of individuals that significantly impact their health and well being. If you would like further information or have questions, please contact Amy Niles, Executive Vice President at aniles@panfoundation.org.

Sincerely,



Kevin L. Hagan
President and Chief Executive Officer