

Congresswoman Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member Testimony
June 23, 2020

Opening

Thank you, Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger for allowing me to speak on my requests for Fiscal Year 2021.

Black and brown communities like those in my district bear the brunt of environmental and health inequities. From the lack of access to healthy foods and green spaces, to air pollution that contributes to respiratory diseases and other ailments, our communities get short-changed.

I would like to focus my time on three crucial requests that are necessary for improving the health and wellbeing of communities like mine.

Program 1: CDC Social Determinants of Health Program- Report Language

Social and economic conditions have a major influence on individual and community health. This includes education level, housing, employment, and access to healthy foods.

These social determinants of health disproportionately affect Black and brown communities in my district and across the country. Unfortunately, most local and state health departments lack funding and tools to address this issue.

This is why I am requesting report language modeled after my bill, the Improving Social Determinants of Health Act (H.R. 6561) to designate and fund a Social Determinants of Health Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The program would award grants to public health and community organizations to address social determinants of health in communities, and to universities and nonprofits to research best practices to tackle this issue. This program would go a long way to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequities.

Program 2: EPA's Targeted Airshed Grant Program

Many of my constituents live within 1,000 feet of a freeway, in close proximity to thousands of heavy-duty trucks driving by them each day, many bringing cargo to the Port of Los Angeles.

The particulate matter produced by the truck's diesel emissions contribute to some of the worst air quality in the country and can trigger asthma attacks, cause lung cancer, increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes, and may impact pregnancy.

In short, this pollution is deadly. It is not an understatement for health experts to call this high traffic area a "Diesel Death Zone".

That is why my second request is for \$75 million dollars for the Environmental Protection Agency's Targeted Airshed Grant Program.

This program provides funding to pollution control agencies to reduce particulate and ozone pollution in the worst polluted areas in the country, such as South Los Angeles.

With more funding, this program will be able to improve the health of the most vulnerable communities across the country.

Program 3: NIH Minority Centers of Excellence Program

Lastly, I am requesting \$25 million for the National Institutes of Health, Minority Centers of Excellence Program.

The Minority Centers of Excellence Program supports research in minority health and health disparities, promotes the training of a diverse research workforce, disseminates research findings, and fosters innovative collaborations and partnerships.

Charles Drew University in my district has previously been recognized as a center of excellence - and would provide invaluable training and research to address disparities Black and brown communities in my district face.

The research conducted at the Centers will have a direct and demonstrable impact on addressing minority health and health disparities.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. I look forward to your support and urge you to include these requests in your funding bill for the next fiscal year.