

Health Impact Assessment Act of 2008

Introduced by Senator Robert Menendez

Background

A health impact assessment is a combination of procedures and methods which are used to analyze the actual or potential effects of a policy or program on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects. Uninformed land use and public policy decisions can contribute to health inequities, chronic disease, increased sprawl and traffic, decreased air and water quality, loss of green space and inappropriate siting of facilities and other unwanted health consequences.

Purpose

The *Health Impact Assessment Act of 2008* (HIAA) seeks to improve the public's health by policy and by design, and explores solutions to these address these concerns. This bill will encourage policies and programs to improve community health through physical environments and through social policy.

Summary of HIAA

Through two GAO studies, the bill identifies best practices for assessing planning and impact of land use and building design, and social policy on community health.

- Directs a GAO study to research best practices, standardized tools and models for health impact assessments as a method to promote health and reduce health disparities through social policy process, land use and the built environment.
- Directs the GAO to review the positive and negative health consequences of federal policies and programs, and how to consider HIAs for any federally-funded project, at the federal, state or local level.

The bill creates a national clearinghouse and demonstration program to improve the built environment and promote health.

- The grant program will fund state and local health or planning departments to manage an HIA project in their state or municipality.
- The clearinghouse will disseminate best practices, and provide technical assistance and training about the scope and uses of HIAs related to community planning and policy making.

The bill also builds CDC capacity to promote the HIA processes by developing guidance for potential health effects of social policy, land use and design, housing, and transportation policy and plans.

Endorsements

National Association of County & City Health Officials, Partnership for Prevention, American College of Preventive Medicine, American Public Health Association, Trust for America's Health.