

## Reducing Health and Health Care Disparities Through Data-Driven Strategies in Florida's Medicaid Program

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### **The problem:**

Health and health care disparities in the United States lead to certain groups being at higher risk of more limited access to care, experiencing poorer quality of care, and ultimately experiencing worse health outcomes. It also makes health care more expensive for everyone by triggering excess health care costs estimated to be \$93 billion annually.<sup>1</sup>

Florida's Statewide Medicaid Managed Care Program (SMMC) provides a valuable opportunity to reduce disparities and unnecessary costs. Through this program, nearly 4 million beneficiaries are enrolled in managed care plans. By law, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) is required to collect "performance measure" data to monitor the quality of services provided by the plans. However, there is no requirement in Florida law that AHCA collect and report this data broken down by race, ethnicity, primary language, sex, or disability.

Experts agree that collection of this stratified data is an essential first step for developing targeted strategies to eliminate disparities. Multiple states are already using performance measures to actively monitor and report on health disparities in their Medicaid managed care programs.<sup>2</sup>

### **How HB 855 and SB 1258, "Managed Care Plan Performance," address the problem:**

- Help reduce health and health care disparities by requiring the state to disaggregate or break down SMMC performance measure data based on race, ethnicity, disability, and other demographics.
- Assist the Legislature in fulfilling its oversight duties and stewardship of billions of taxpayer dollars allocated to Florida's SMMC. For FY 2021-22, \$22 billion was appropriated for Florida's SMMC.
- Increase transparency and accountability in the SMCC by requiring the state to publicly report on MCO performance measure data based on the demographics listed above.

### **Why now is the time to pass HB 855 and SB 1258:**

The COVID-19 health crisis has exacerbated health and health care disparities. There have been staggering rates of infection and death in communities of color due to the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

### **For more info:**

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<sup>1</sup> Ani Turner, "The Business Case for Racial Equity, A Strategy for Growth," W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Altarum, April 2018, <https://altarum.org/publications/the-business-case-for-racial-equity-a-strategy-for-growth>.

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<sup>2</sup> Kate Reinhalter Bazinsky and Michael Bailit, Bailit Health, “How States Can Use Measurement as a Foundation for Tackling Health Disparities in Medicaid Managed Care,” Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, May 2019, <https://www.shvs.org/resource/how-states-can-use-measurement-as-a-foundation-for-tackling-health-disparities-in-medicaid-managed-care/>.

<sup>3</sup> APM Research Lab, “The Color of Coronavirus: COVID-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.,” February 4, 2021, <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>.