



## **H.R. 4812, THE BORDER HEALTH SECURITY ACT**

### **Background:**

The United States-Mexico border is an interdependent and dynamic region of approximately than 15,000,000 residents and millions of border crossings each year, with significant and unique public health challenges. These challenges include low rates of health insurance coverage, poor access to health care services, lack of education or access to information, poverty, and high rates of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, asthma, diabetes, and obesity.

As the recent coronavirus outbreak has highlighted, diseases do not respect international boundaries, and a strong public health effort at and along the borders is crucial to not only protect and improve the health of Americans but also to help secure the country against threats to biosecurity and other emerging threats. The Border Health Security Act of 2021 ensures that there is continued coordination of resources, effective communication, and information sharing between countries to address emerging public health crises.

### **The Border Health Security Act of 2021:**

- Requires U.S. members of the U.S. Mexico Border Health Commission (Commission) to cooperate with the Canada-United States Pan-Border Public Health Preparedness Council (Council) and to recommend and implement initiatives that solve border health issues. U.S. members of the commission may provide advice or recommendations to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or Congress without authorization or a request.
- Authorizes border health grants for:
  - Grants would be awarded to address issues in the border areas including, but not limited to:
    - Maternal and child health;
    - Primary care and preventative health;
    - Infectious disease testing, monitoring, and surveillance;
    - Behavioral and mental health;
    - Substance abuse prevention and harm reduction;
    - Health conditions that have a high prevalence in the United States-Mexico border area or United States-Canada border area;
    - Workforce training and development.
  - Grants could also be used for Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance (EWIDS) in the border areas. An eligible entity would use the funds to address issues including but not limited to:

- Develop and implement infectious disease surveillance plans and networks and public health emergency and readiness assessments and preparedness plans, and purchase items necessary for such plans;
  - Coordinate infectious disease surveillance planning and interjurisdictional risk assessments in the region with appropriate United States-based agencies and organizations and appropriate authorities in Mexico or Canada;
  - Improve laboratory capacity, in order to maintain and enhance capability and capacity to detect potential infectious disease, whether naturally occurring or the result of terrorism.
- Directs the Commission and the Council to prepare a binational strategic plan that includes priority areas, recommendations to address these priority areas, and an evaluation framework to gauge progress.
  - Directs the Commission and Council to issue a biannual report to the Secretary that provides independent policy recommendations related to border health issues.