



*Connecting People to Policy*

# **OVERVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE HEALTH NOTES**

JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND LABOR

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# INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH NOTES

- **Definition:** Health Notes are nonpartisan policy briefs that analyze how legislative measures could impact key social determinants of health such as education, environment, employment, housing, food security, and healthcare access.
- **Purpose:** To inform policymakers by highlighting potential health outcomes of proposed measures, ensuring that health considerations are integrated into decision-making processes.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH NOTES

- Health Notes do not make recommendations and do not advocate for or against the proposed legislation.
- They do advocate for a holistic approach to policymaking, recognizing that health is influenced by a wide range of factors beyond just healthcare.
- **Preventive Approach:** Health Notes can help to proactively address the root causes of health issues, emphasizing the impacts of legislative measures on vulnerable populations.

# HEALTH NOTES SIX STEP PROCESS

- 1. Screening** – Identifying bills that would be most beneficial.
- 2. Scoping** – Considering the potential health effect of the bills, develop research questions about the bill's connections, or pathways, to health.
- 3. Research** – Conducting and tracking a rapid evidence review for prioritized pathways identified during scoping and bill analysis.
- 4. Drafting** – Writing the health note and obtaining peer review from subject matter experts.
- 5. Dissemination** – Sharing the final health note with legislators and public.
- 6. Monitoring and Evaluation** – Assessing legislator engagement with and response to health notes.

Source: Larson Institute for Health Impact and Equity, School of Public Health, University of Nevada, Reno; [makinghealthhappen.org](https://makinghealthhappen.org)

# HEALTH NOTE EXAMPLES

- Connecticut – *General Statutes of Connecticut* [Section 2-24b](#) of Chapter 16. Authorizes a state legislator to request the preparation of a racial and ethnic impact statement for any bill favorably reported during the regular session. Procedures for preparation of such statements included in the joint rules of the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- Illinois – *Illinois Compiled Statutes* [Section 110-5 through 110-25](#). Any legislator can request the preparation of a racial impact note for any bill that could have a disparate impact on racial and ethnic minorities. The note is to include, “a reliable estimate of the anticipated impact on those racial and ethnic minorities likely to be impacted by the bill.”

# HEALTH NOTES EXAMPLES CONT.

- Maryland – In 2021, the General Assembly established a pilot program that includes racial impact statements as part of the legislative analysis developed by the nonpartisan Department of Legislative Services. The Racial Equity Impact Note (REIN) unit evaluates the racial impact of selected criminal justice legislation.
  - Example: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2024RS-HB0175-REIN.pdf>
- Washington – *Revised Code of Washington* 43.20.285. At the request of the Governor or any state Legislator, the State Board of Health, in collaboration with the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities, is required to conduct a health impact review on any proposal for a legislation or budgetary change.
  - Example: <https://sboh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/HIR-2024-02-SSB%205171a.pdf>

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE LEGISLATURE

- 1. Legislative Scope and Criteria** – Determine which types of legislation will require a health note.
- 2. Integration into the legislative Process** – Decide how and when health notes will be integrated into the legislative process.
- 3. Resource Allocation** – Ensure there are sufficient resources, including funding, staffing, and access to data, to support the creation and review of health notes.
- 4. Expertise and Capacity** – Assess the need for public health expertise within the legislature or through partnerships with external organizations. Consider training for legislators and staff on how to utilize health notes in the policy making process

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE LEGISLATURE CONT.

- 5. Equity and Social Justice** – Health notes should explicitly address how proposed policies impact health equity, particularly for marginalized or vulnerable populations.
- 6. Time and efficiency** – Balance the need for comprehensive analysis with the legislative timeline.
- 7. Transparency and Accountability** – Determine how health notes will be made public and how they will be used to for considering the health impacts.
- 8. Monitoring and Evaluation** – Consider a pilot program or study to monitor the effectiveness of health notes and evaluate their impact on legislation and public health outcomes



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Pew Charitable Trust
  - [A User's Guide to Legislative Health Notes](#)
  - [Health Impact Project: Health Notes](#)
- Health in All Policies Research Center, Institute for Health and Social Policy, Bloomberg School of Public Health, John Hopkins
  - [Health in All Policies Initiative](#)