



Annual Report

FY24 - July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

AsclepiusInitiative.org

Our Mission

Improve the health and economic stability of Kentuckians through educating, inspiring, and mobilizing people to advocate for a universally accessible, affordable, equitable, and high-quality healthcare delivery system.

From the Founder



Susan Bornstein, MD, MPH
Founder and CEO

As a practicing OBGYN for 20 years, I saw firsthand the struggles my patients faced due to high health care costs and access challenges. It was this frustration that led me to pursue a master's degree in public health in 2017. My education reinforced the idea that many, if not all of, the difficulties my patients (and I) experience/d in obtaining affordable, equitable care are a consequence of the inherent structure of our healthcare system.

The U.S. remains the only high-income country that does not provide health care coverage for all its citizens. Despite having the highest per capita healthcare costs, we have the lowest life expectancy, the highest rates of maternal and infant mortality, and the greatest burden of chronic disease among our peer nations. Minority groups and lower-wage earners are often hit the hardest, paying a disproportionate share of their income for health care. I founded The Asclepius Initiative (TAI) to educate Kentuckians on the ways in which our current system fails to meet the needs of so many and to catalyze discussions around options for improvement. At its heart, the goal of TAI is to build support for a more inclusive, affordable, and equitable system.

We are grateful to the Kentucky Department for Public Health's Office of Health Equity for funding that allowed TAI to launch a health care coverage literacy project to educate Kentuckians on how to:

- Obtain and more effectively utilize their health care coverage
- Compare coverage options
- Decode insurance terminology
- Assess the pros and cons of Medicare versus Medicare Advantage
- Understand HSAs, FSAs, HRAs... *and more*

All of the above are critical competencies when navigating the complexity of our current system.

Help us improve the lives of our fellow Kentuckians. If you are able to donate or would like to volunteer with TAI, please reach out through our website, AsclepiusInitiative.org, or email info@asclepiusinitiative.org. Your contribution can make a significant difference in our efforts to improve the physical, emotional, and financial well-being of us all.

How We're Making a Difference

Health Care Coverage Literacy

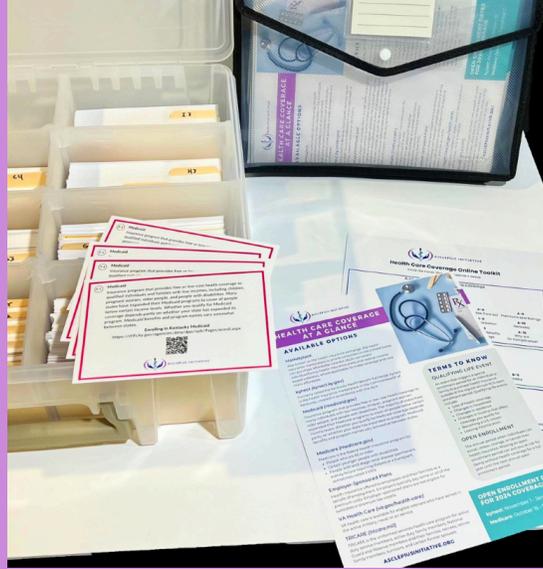
- Produced online coverage resources in English, Spanish, French, and Somali
- Created an educational video library
- Reached 4,000+ Kentuckians through community partnerships
- Outreach to Black, Spanish-speaking, rural, and refugee communities

Learning from Kentuckians

- Grant from The Commonwealth Fund to better understand the disconnect between Kentucky's relatively low (health) uninsurance rates and the state's poor health outcomes
- Longitudinal survey exploring Kentuckians' attitudes and beliefs about the U.S. healthcare system

Working Toward a Better Future

- Grew Board of Directors to 14 active and 4 advisory members
- Hired a Communications Associate
- Expanded TAI's presence on television, radio, and digital media
- Capitalized on opportunities to build relationships locally and nationally



A Year of Accomplishment

The Asclepius Initiative is proud to report that we brought in a little over \$625,000 in grants and individual contributions in FY24.

During this past year, TAI has made great strides in improving health care coverage literacy, with outreach across Kentucky. Thanks to a grant from the Kentucky Department for Public Health's Office of Health Equity, we launched a comprehensive educational program designed to improve health care coverage literacy in Black, Spanish-speaking, and rural populations across the Commonwealth.

This allowed us to offer **free** resources on:

- Insurance terminology
- Medicare vs. Medicare Advantage
- Detecting errors in medical billing and insurance reimbursement
- Understanding HSAs, FSAs, and HRAS... *and more*

Our free resources are accessible at AsclepiusInitiative.org/toolkit. These educational materials contributed to a 64.6% increase in unique visitors to our website compared to FY23.

In June 2024, TAI received a \$185,000 grant from The Commonwealth Fund under which, in conjunction with TAI, University of Louisville researchers will hold focus groups throughout the state to better understand the gap between Kentucky's relatively low (health) uninsurance rate and its surprisingly and inversely poor health outcomes of its population.

We are also conducting a biennial survey to explore and track Kentuckians' experiences and beliefs about the U.S. healthcare system. Our first survey in 2022 found that 86% of uninsured Kentuckians, and 64% of those WITH insurance have been forced to avoid, skip, or discontinue vital medical care and/or

medications due to financial constraints. Our survey also found that 67% of Kentuckians favor a national health plan that would provide health insurance for everyone.

TAI's media presence expanded with our CEO's interviews on radio and television, including a multi-state broadcast. Our board has grown to 14 active and four advisory members, providing diverse subject matter expertise. We also hired our first paid full-time employee, Laci Comer, a Communications Associate who brings a strong background in journalism and nonprofit experience.

Our digital presence grew with the creation of TAI's YouTube channel and monthly newsletter. We also delivered in-person presentations to groups including the Frankfort Avenue Business Association, Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Louisville Free Public Libraries, and Louisville Metro Government front line workers.

TAI has taken advantage of networking opportunities, with both a breakout session and an event table at the Kentucky Rural Health Association's annual conference, a presentation and a poster at the Kentucky Conference on Health Communications, a participant's table at the Kentucky Department for Public Health's Office of Health Equity Summit, and attendance at CMS' Health Equity Conference in Baltimore.

As we look to the future, The Asclepius Initiative anticipates continuing this momentum, reaching even more people, influencing public policy, and driving forward the vision of a universally accessible, affordable, equitable, and high-quality healthcare system.

Our Goals for FY25

- Continue to build capacity to advance our mission
- Continue to increase health care coverage literacy throughout Kentucky
- Work to make our health care coverage educational materials available to a broader audience



Kevin Pearce, MD, MPH
Board Chair

For more than 38 years as a board-certified family physician, I've seen firsthand the immense challenges individuals face in accessing adequate health care. It's frustrating to witness patients in a country as wealthy as the U.S. struggle with poor health outcomes, despite the nation's enormous healthcare spending.

My research in healthcare delivery led me to understand that a root of this problem is inequitable access to affordable health care coverage. Many individuals, especially those with lower incomes, are forced to either purchase inadequate health insurance or forgo coverage entirely. Meanwhile, health insurance companies in the U.S. are reaping substantial profits, often by denying necessary services that are routinely covered in other developed nations.

My frustration turned into hope when I learned about The Asclepius Initiative. TAI educates, inspires, and mobilizes citizens to advocate for a universally accessible, affordable, and equitable healthcare system. Joining TAI in 2021, I've been proud to serve as its Board Chair since 2023 and to contribute to this mission.

Within three short years, TAI has made significant progress. First, TAI conducted a survey assessing the attitudes and beliefs of 1,000 adult Kentuckians with respect to the U.S. healthcare delivery system and their willingness to entertain alternative delivery models. We then partnered with community organizations across Kentucky to educate the public on how health care coverage works, how to best navigate it, and use it to their advantage. We are also driving discussions on healthcare reform.

As we embark on a new project to shed light on specific barriers that contribute to Kentucky's poor health outcomes, I am deeply grateful to be part of an organization that is making a real difference for individuals and communities.

Board of Directors

Kevin Pearce, MD, MPH
Chair

Shireen Deobhakta, PhD
Vice Chair

Kimberlee Turner
Secretary

Steve Barger
Treasurer

Craig Blakely, MD, MPH · John Chessare, MD, MPH · Carole Christian, JD · Lindsay Della, PhD

Michael Gruenthal, MD, PhD · Barbara Hadley Smith · Kim Link, DNP

Daniel Weber, CPA · Elizabeth Wessels Martin, MSW · Jeffrey Zakem

Advisory Board Members

Tina Bojanowski, PhD · Susan Bornstein, MD, MPH · Lee Gill, JD · Bill Londrigan

We also wish to thank those who serve on our Education and Messaging, Development, Finance, Strategic Planning and Metrics, and Bylaws and Governance Committees, and the Research Advisory Council.

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