



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor – Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor – S. Anthony McCann, Secretary

OCT 29 2004

The Honorable Paula Hollinger, Chairman
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Building, 2 West Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable John Adams Hurson, Chairman
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 161, Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401-1991

RE: 2004 Annual Report for the Health Care Services
Disparities Prevention Act \ HB 883 (2003) Chapter 453

Dear Chairmen Hollinger and Hurson:

Pursuant to House Bill 883 enacted during the 2003 legislative session, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (the Department) submits the first annual report of its activities and future plans to reduce health care services disparities. HB 883-2003 requires the Department to develop and implement a plan to reduce health care services disparities in Maryland. Although no funds were appropriated with passage of the Bill, the Department identified existing resources to begin the initial program implementation while other funding is being sought.

Addressing health disparities in Maryland is critical since the research shows that minorities experience a lower quality of health care services and are less likely to access even routine medical procedures relative to Caucasian Americans. This gap between minority and nonminority Marylanders has persisted. Research suggests that health care provider's diagnostic and treatment decisions, as well as their feelings about patients, are influenced by the patient's race or ethnicity. As such, the Department has developed and is in the process of implementing a plan to reduce health services disparities as required by HB 883-2003. A summary of the Department's efforts and future activities is set forth below.

Completed Preparatory Work:

- A. Launched a Health Disparities Web site in May 2004 at www.mdhealthdisparities.org
- B. Planned and held a one-day Health Disparities Conference on June 8, 2004 at UMBC with over 300 persons in attendance.
 - Dean Donald Wilson, Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam and Secretary Nelson Sabatini were featured speakers at the conference. Federal and Maryland officials and experts presented on panels and led afternoon breakout sessions during the conference.
 - Conference participants provided 125 recommendations for reducing health disparities in Maryland. These recommendations will be distributed to the planning committees.
- C. The Department established a new office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (MHHD) in the Office of the Secretary and transferred in three FTEs to bolster staff resources. The Department also contracted with a physician epidemiologist, Web site manager, health planner and grants writer to provide MHHD office support to implement the legislative mandates.
- D. Recruited chairpersons from private sector organizations and interest groups to guide four committees established to develop the Maryland Plan for Reducing Health Disparities.
- E. Recruited key administrations within the Department to collaborate in developing the Health Disparities Plan and other activities to reduce health disparities.
- F. Met with many members from organizations listed in HB 883-2003 as key partners in reducing health disparities and sought their input, participation and ongoing advice.
- G. Participated in the three-day federal HHS's Office of Minority Health's Annual Leadership Conference to gain insight from other state office's structure, funding and successful programs.
- H. Established and moderated a panel on health disparities at the October 12, 2004 conference organized by the Maryland Institute for Community Health.

Current Projects:

- A. Scheduling a briefing session with the Chairs and staff of the four separate Health Disparities' Committees that were established to work on the Health Disparities Plan
- B. Scheduling the first meeting of each of four Health Disparities' Committees for November 2004.
- C. Seeking involvement of the entities listed in legislation, plus others to participate in developing the plan and serving on a statewide collaborative of groups and individuals who can provide input to the Department.
- D. Recruiting diverse minority groups, health providers, academicians, advocacy groups, elected officials, local health officers and Department experts to serve on the committees
- E. Collecting health disparities data for the Health Disparities Web site, planning Committee work groups and developing a Health Disparities Chartbook with data on health disparities in Maryland.

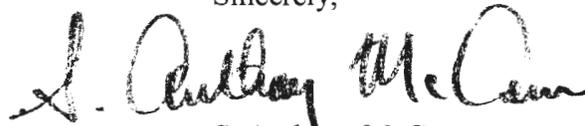
- F. Conducting research on the Internet for current information to populate the Health Disparities' Web site and provide best practices to MHHD staff and members of the Health Disparities Committees.
- G. Developing a prospectus and information to search for federal and other resources to support the MHHD infrastructure and to provide grants to community groups who have fundable interventions for reducing health disparities
- H. Preparing to make two presentations on Maryland's health disparities programs at the American Public Health Association's annual conference in Washington, D.C. in November.
- I. Meeting with an array of minority groups to inform them about the Maryland Health Disparities Initiative and to solicit their participation on the ground floor of developments.

The Future:

- A. Work with hospitals and physician organizations to examine continuing education requirements, determine the content of a model course or seminar on health disparities, and assess the feasibility of expanding the numbers of providers who take courses on health disparities.
- B. The Department will assess its major health service delivery programs and develop recommendations and implementation plans for closing gaps in health services delivery and financial access.
- C. The Department will coordinate implementation of provisions in House Bill 883-2003 with the provisions in House Bill 86-2004, Chapter 319, which established the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities.

The health disparities initiative is a step forward in Maryland's effort to address continuing health disparities. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is committed to marshalling its resources and acquiring new ones to move Maryland forward in the reduction and future elimination of health disparities among ethnic and racial minorities to make Maryland a truly "Healthy Population." If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (410) 767-6505. If your office would like further information, please have them contact Dr. Carlessia A. Hussein at (410) 767-0094.

Sincerely,



S. Anthony McCann
Secretary

cc: Carlessia A. Hussein, R.N., Dr. P.H.
Robyn S. Elliott
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
House Health and Government Operations Committee