



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

DEC 08 2005

The Honorable Paula C. Hollinger  
Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Peter A. Hammen  
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 161 Lowe House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: 2005 Annual Report for the Health Care Services  
Disparities Prevention Act HB 883 (2003) Chapter 453

Dear Chairmen Hollinger and Hammen:

Pursuant to House Bill 883 enacted during the 2003 legislative session, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (the Department) submits the 2005 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.

House Bill 86 enacted during the 2004 legislative session required the Department to establish an Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities that would serve as the focal point for implementing a plan to eliminate minority health disparities and facilitate other projects that will reduce minority health disparities in Maryland. Although no funds were appropriated with passage of these two bills, 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 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 established a number of initiatives to address both HB 883 and HB 86 in a coordinated manner. A summary of the Department's efforts and future activities is set forth below.

Accomplishments:

- A. Launched a Health Disparities Web site in May 2004 at [www.mdhealthdisparities.org](http://www.mdhealthdisparities.org), which contains disparities data, health disparities reports and disparities resources.

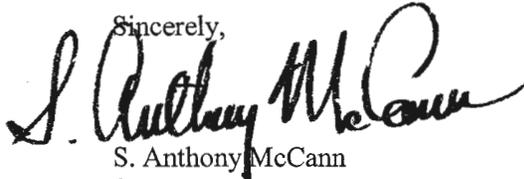
- B. Planned and held two one-day Health Disparities Conferences:
- May 3, 2005 at the Best Western Hotel and Conference Center; attendees discussed and submitted changes to draft recommendations prepared by statewide committees that had met during the previous seven months; 200 persons participated;
  - June 8, 2004 at the University of Maryland Baltimore County; attendees discussed the minority health disparities in Maryland and the economic and human costs to the State and its citizens; consensus was reached requesting the Department to take an active leadership in moving the entire State forward to reduce health disparities; 300 persons participated;
- C. The Department's new Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (MHHD) worked closely with the Department's Secretary to achieve the objectives set forth in legislation. Although funds were not identified with passage of either bill, the Department has found limited internal resources to obtain a physician epidemiologist, Information Specialist/Web site manager, health planner and grants writer to move programs forward. Funds for these staff are available on a year-to-year basis. The Office continues to seek funding to stabilize staff and operations.
- D. Four statewide committees met monthly between November 2004 and June 2005 to review health disparities data and information, discuss the implications for action in Maryland and propose recommendations for action by the public and private sectors. Over 100 recommendations were drafted for inclusion in the Maryland Plan to Eliminate Minority Health Disparities.
- E. Held six Town Hall meetings between July and September 2005 in Frederick, Waldorf, Salisbury, Denton, Rockville and Baltimore, Maryland. These meetings were designed to reach minority populations and distant geographic locations in order to gather more diverse input into recommendations for reducing health disparities. The CRFP Minority Outreach and Technical Assistance grantees were instrumental in locating meeting space and reaching out to all minority groups in each area.
- F. Received a five-year State Partnership Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health to improve minority health in Maryland. The award amount is \$785,750. The grant supports two projects, Workforce Diversity and DHMH Self Assessment to identify and enhance best practices for reducing minority health disparities.
- G. Organized and coordinated the National Public Health Week event in Maryland in June and the National "Take a Loved One for a Check-Up Day" event in September. Partnered with the Maryland General Hospital and other groups in these events.
- H. Spoke with many groups and made presentations: MD Cardiovascular Disease Council; UMD School of Law; HHS, Office of Civil Rights; Holy Cross Hospital Health Disparities Program; Baltimore American Indian Center; MD Public Health Association; the Student National Medical Association; MD Black Caucus; and the 2004 American Public Health Association conference in Washington, D.C.

Current and Future Projects:

- A. Implementing two projects funded by the HHS Grant; Workforce Diversity that will partner with major health professional schools and implement best practices to increase minority enrollment; and the Departmental Self Assessment wherein the Department will identify its strengths and success in order to enhance the focus on reducing health disparities. Hiring staff and developing work plans to carry out these projects; and participating with the HHS Office of Minority Health in cooperative management of these grant activities.
- B. Seeking an editor/writer to use the vast input collected from throughout the State to write and publish the Maryland Plan to Eliminate Minority Health Disparities. Will collaborate with the Statewide Planning Committees, minority interest groups and advocacy groups in development of the Plan.
- C. Continuing recruitment of diverse minority groups, health providers, academicians, advocacy groups, elected officials, local health officers and DHMH program experts to collaborate with the Office in all efforts to reduce minority health disparities.
- D. 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.
- E. 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.
- F. Seeking foundation support and partnership in implementing statewide initiatives to reduce minority health disparities; holding conversations with Maryland based and regional foundations.
- G. Continuing to meeting with a number of minority groups to inform them about the Maryland Health Disparities Initiative and to solicit their active participation.
- H. Coordinating implementation of provisions in House Bill 883 with the provisions in House Bill 86, which established the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is committed to marshalling its resources and acquiring new ones to move Maryland forward towards the reduction and future elimination of health disparities among ethnic and racial minorities, in order to make Maryland a truly "Healthy Population." If you have questions concerning this initiative, please contact Dr. Carlessia A. Hussein, Director, Minority Health and Health Disparities at (410) 767-0094.

Sincerely,



S. Anthony McCann  
Secretary

cc: Michelle A. Gourdine, M.D.  
Carlessia A. Hussein, R.N., Dr. P.H.  
Ms. Robyn S. Elliott