

COVID-19 Health Disparities Meeting

April 15, 2020

On April 9, 2020, in response to health disparities in COVID-19 outcomes, the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) Taskforce of Baltimore City convened an emergency meeting with key stakeholders positioned to address disparities. According to the Maryland Department of Health, **as of April 22, 2020**, Maryland had 14,775 confirmed COVID cases and 631 COVID deaths. In Maryland — of those infected and race known — 49.4 percent were black, 36.9 percent were white, and 13.7 percent were Asian or another race. Of the COVID-related deaths (race known), 53 percent were African Americans, 38 percent were white, and 5.5 percent were Asians. For this meeting, Baltimore City is the region of focus. Baltimore City, as of April 22, 2020, had 1,602 confirmed cases: 58 deaths and six probable deaths COVID-related. In Baltimore City, ZIP code 21215 was considered a hotspot with one of the highest number of cases in the state. The disparities COVID-related outcomes were likely linked to the social determinants of health, or conditions in which many live in Baltimore City, thus, making it pertinent for the SDH Taskforce to convene an information-sharing meeting to provide advice and make recommendations for immediate action.

The goal of this COVID disparities meeting was to identify solutions, address COVID-related disparities, and build meaningful partnerships for action. The SDH Taskforce under the leadership of Yolanda Ogbolu, Chris Gibbons, and senior advisor and retired state senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam called a meeting with key stakeholders from the taskforce: Greystone, Inc., universities, faith-based institutions, Maryland Public Health Association, Baltimore's Field Office of Housing and Urban Development, Black Nurses Association, Monumental Medical Association, and the African American Health Alliance. During the meeting, participants identified many areas of potential partnerships to address the disparities. Some of these efforts require additional support at the policy level. The following is a brief review of the meeting:

The virtual meeting opened with a welcome from Dr. Ogbolu and Nathan-Pulliam. Ogbolu and Nathan-Pulliam encouraged open communication to identify solutions and build partnerships to address disparities. Dr. Gibbons moderated the discussion. The initial discussion was of the COVID community screening team that he, through Greystone, Inc., developed in collaboration with Simmons Memorial Baptist Church and Dr. Dan Howard in Baltimore. Gibbons briefly described the program and clarified the concept paper, which had been shared with participants ahead of the meeting.

The meeting outcome was an opportunity to share information and recommend solutions for addressing COVID disparities. The table below lists the names of participants, their organization, contact information, and a snapshot of their COVID-specific activities, as well as opportunities to collaborate.

Name	Organization/Title	Contact Email	Brief summary of COVID activities and opportunities to collaborate
1. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam	SDH Taskforce, Senior Advisor	shirleynathanpulliam@gmail.com	The senior advisor to the SDH Taskforce and retired state senator welcomed invited participants, briefly described the scope of disparities for vulnerable communities, and encouraged participants to identify solutions to protect the citizens of Baltimore.
2. Chris Gibbons	SDH Taskforce, Co-Chair	mcg@greystonehit.com	The CEO of Greystone, Inc., and SDH Taskforce co-chair moderated the meeting. Gibbons introduced his involvement in a COVID screening program led by Greystone in collaboration with Simmons Memorial Baptist Church and Dr. Dan Howard.
3. Yolanda Ogbolu	SDH Taskforce, Co-Chair	ogbolu@umaryland.edu	University of Maryland School of Nursing and School of Medicine faculty member and SDH Taskforce co-chair moderated the meeting. Ogbolu

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			described her work on social isolation in West Baltimore in collaboration with B'more for Healthy Babies (Upton/Mondawmin), Black Mental Health Alliance, and Promise Heights; how COVID exacerbates current challenges with social isolation; and access to social resources.
4. Klaus Philipsen	SDH Taskforce Subcommittee: Housing, Co-Chair	kphilipsen@archplan.com	Philipsen described the work at Simmons Memorial Baptist Church through a preliminary concept paper. Philipsen encouraged participants to consider supporting the program and enhancing and growing into a "coronataxi" program.
5. Annelle Primm	SDH Taskforce Subcommittee: Health and Human Services, Co-Chair	annelleprimm@gmail.com	Primm is a community psychiatrist and co-chair of the SDH Taskforce Health and Human Services Subcommittee. Primm described her work with The Steve Fund, which is addressing challenges for college students impacted by COVID. Primm shared her work as convener of the All Healers Mental Health Alliance, an organization that has been responding to natural and human-caused disasters since 2005 to help address the needs of marginalized communities. Primm also collaborates with the Institute of the Black World Black Family Summit to develop a "listening line" for first responders including health care, sanitation, and food service workers.
6. Charles Jackson	SDH Taskforce Subcommittee: Health and Human Services, Co-Chair	Charles.jackson2@hotmail.com	Jackson, the SDH Taskforce Health and Human Services co-chair, described his efforts to support food assistance programs in Baltimore City during the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. Duane V. Simmons	Simmons Memorial Baptist Church, Pastor		Pastor Simmons raised concerns related to community members having extreme adverse outcomes (e.g., last to receive services and resources). Simmons acknowledged that often community members are slow to respond to resources. He has personally witnessed people not respecting social distancing and recognizes the need for intervention now. Simmons Memorial is in the middle of the pandemic — well-positioned geographically to meet the needs of the community. Simmons welcomes collaboration with members of the workgroup.
8. Daniel Howard	Simmons Memorial Baptist Church; Lead Physician for Simmons program	dhowardmd@hotmail.com	Dr. Howard is a primary care physician working in West Baltimore addressing the needs of the community. During COVID-19, Howard was concerned about the lack of treatment and increased risk for community members related to comorbidities and the need for drug treatment; thus, he promoted telehealth to deliver primary care. Howard is leading medical services in collaboration with Simmons Memorial Church while

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			seeking assistance/partnerships with health professionals and others to support the program.
9. Joyous Jones	Simmons Memorial Baptist Church, Retired Registered Nurse		Jones is a retired nurse, member of Simmons Memorial Baptist Church, and a well-respected community member who works directly with community members at the ground level. Jones also provides health support (i.e., hypertension screening) and works with community health workers. Jones highlighted the need for stakeholders to come together and for the community to make sure that resources reach those in need.
10. Jan Desper Peters	BTST Services	j.peters@btstservices.com	Peters is a member of SDH Taskforce's Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. Her organization, BTST provides psychiatric rehabilitation services, medical management, and community outreach. Peters suggested that a weekly podcast may be leveraged to discuss COVID disparities with a specific focus on mental health. Peters is willing to assist with mental health and substance use disorder activities.
11. Laundette Jones	SDH Taskforce Subcommittee: Health and Human Services, Member	ljones@som.umaryland.edu	Jones, a University of Maryland School of Medicine faculty member, is examining COVID testing structures, processes, and outcomes. Jones' interest is learning more about the various types of COVID tests, the tests' reliability and validity, the outcomes, and whether these outcomes vary according to demographic factors or communities. Other interests include policy changes related to needing a prescription to be tested. Jones questions if this policy could be lifted.
12. Carol Payne	HUD, Baltimore, Field Office Director	Carol.b.payne@hud.gov	Payne called in to participate. She is available to support community members, the taskforce, and others related to housing issues during the COVID outbreak. Comments were sent via email.
13. Vaple Robinson	Black Nurses Association (BNA), President	Vaple2@comcast.net	Robinson, president of BNA, described the work being done to make and share masks/face coverings for community members in Baltimore. Vaple offered to support Simmons Memorial by reaching out to their network of volunteers.
14. Stephen Thomas	University of Maryland, College Park, Director of Center for Health Equity	sbt@umd.edu	Thomas raised important points related to building partnerships during this critical juncture. He highlighted a few funding opportunities and encouraged collaboration through smaller groups to meet the needs of the community.
15. Carlessia Hussein	Retired Director, Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities	CaHussein@verizon.net	Hussein called in and submitted comments via email. She suggested telemedicine and home visits are great ideas and could work well for the target communities. Hussein mentioned challenges such as resources, coordination and collaboration across programs/entities, and access/use of new technologies. Big sponsors and partners are needed to donate time

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			and money. Some suggestions: BCF, UMD, TV, radio stations, Johns Hopkins, and others. To identify patients, consider adding food banks, homecare workers, home-schooling managers, firefighters, and others who visit homes. Hussein recommended adding a well-trained epidemiologist to the team to set up data collection, supervise data analysis, and reporting.
16. Harolyn Belcher	Center for Diversity in Public Health Leadership Training, Kennedy Krieger Institute, Physician and Director; SDH Taskforce Subcommittee: Health and Human Services	Belcher@KennedyKrieger.org	Dr. Belcher reported working with a committee at Johns Hopkins to request COVID race and ethnicity data for Baltimore City. Belcher alerted stakeholders to the increases in Baltimore's SNAP programs. Belcher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with the Baltimore City Health Department regarding challenges with teens and social distancing in the city. • Worked with J.P. Morgan providing scholarships to students who will attend historically black colleges and universities from underserved communities through her Center for Diversity in Public Health Leadership. • Volunteered to assist with technology-based activities including those that can be implemented via Zoom and telephonic activities.
17. Leonard Richardson	Monumental Medical Association	doctor@kingdommedicine.com	Richardson is a primary care physician in Pikesville, Md. He highlighted the importance of action given the increased prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, coronary artery disease, hypertension, and diabetes in the Anne Arundel County community. Richardson also is an internal medicine physician who provides COVID care in an all hospitals. He proposes to solicit volunteers from his network in the Monumental Medical Association to support the efforts.
18. Fredette West	African American Health Alliance	fdwest@comcast.net	West requested that stakeholders consider developing a model that could be scaled up and replicated within communities. West emphasized the importance of data collection related to the number of people assisted and their outcomes. Fredette is interested in learning more about the partnership opportunities.
19. Seleste Upshaw	Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Bachelor	snuupshaw@live.com	Upshaw reported that the nursing sorority in Baltimore is working on making masks/face coverings. She is interested in reaching out to their network of nurses to request volunteers.
20. Raimee Eck	Maryland Public Health Association, President	Raimee1eck@gmail.com	Eck reported that the Maryland Public Health Association is coordinating a regional network of public health members to share best practices in addressing COVID. Additionally, engaging experts in epidemiology, geographic information systems, database management, as well as clinical and public health experts. Eck mentions the association also is receiving

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			requests for student placements from individuals across the state. Eck volunteered to assist with data management, analysis, and dissemination. Others on the call from this organization included Francine Baker
21. Kyle Burton	Emergency Room Physician, Johns Hopkins	Kburto13@jhmi.edu	Burton is working on the front line and personally witnessing disparities. He is interested in collaborating with BCHD, utilizing the CHARMCare site to provide social determinant of health resources with individuals who are presenting those needs. Burton is willing to be a resource in addressing disparities.
22. Allen Tien	President and Chief Science Officer, mdlogix	allentien@gmail.com	Tien is a member of the SDH Taskforce's Health and Human Services Committee. He is a leader of a commercial company that provides data support to researchers and other professionals. This company is expanding in the area of telehealth and data collection related to COVID-19. Tien reported that the newly developed COVID-19 symptom questionnaire is utilized in and around Baltimore City. He offers his services and willingness to share resources to interested parties.
23. Denyce Watties-Daniels	Coppin State University, Professor	DWatties-Daniels@coppin.edu	Daniels is educating community members about COVID-19 and protective measures.
24. Dr. Gould			
The following individuals were invited and consulted by phone but unable to attend the virtual meeting:			
25. Noel Braithwaite	Maryland Office of Minority Health, Director	Noel.braithwaite@maryland.gov	
26. Mayor Jack Young	Baltimore City Mayor	bcyoung@baltimorecity.gov	
27. Fran Philips	Deputy Secretary	Phone invitation	
28. Letitia Dzirasa	Baltimore City Health Commission	Phone invitation	
29. George Howard	National Association of Health Services Executives	Phone invitation	
30. Keiffer Jackson Mitchell	Community Representative for Governor Hogan	keiffer.mitchell@maryland.gov	
31. A. Adar Ayira	Associated Black Charities	aayira@abc.md.org	

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32. Delegate, Joseline Pena- Melynk	Vice Chair of Health and Government Operations Committee and Chair of Public Health and Health Disparities Committee	jpenamelynk@gmail.com	