

LT. GOV. BROWN ANNOUNCES MARYLAND'S FIRST FIVE HEALTH ENTERPRISE ZONES

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (January 24, 2013) — Today, Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown announced the designation of the State's first Health Enterprise Zones (HEZ) in five locations: Capitol Heights in Prince George's County, Greater Lexington Park in St. Mary's County, Dorchester and Caroline Counties, West Baltimore, and Annapolis. Community coalitions in each area will receive a range of incentives, benefits, and grant funding to address unacceptable and persistent health disparities.

Championed by the Lt. Governor and jointly administered by the Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) and Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the HEZ Initiative is a four-year pilot program with a budget of \$4 million per year. The purposes of the HEZ Initiative are to: (1) Reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic minority populations and among geographic areas; (2) Improve health care access and health outcomes in underserved communities; and (3) Reduce health care costs and hospital admissions and re-admissions.

To receive designation as an HEZ, community coalitions identified contiguous geographic areas with measurable and documented economic disadvantage and poor health outcomes and proposed a creative plan for targeted investments in community health. Nineteen coalitions submitted proposals in fall 2012.

Representatives from each of the five HEZ coalitions were present at the event including Christine Wray from MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, Roger Harrell from the Dorchester County Health Department, Pam Creekmur from the Prince George's Health Department, Tori Bayless from Anne Arundel Health System and Dr. Sam Ross from Bon Secours Baltimore Health System. Numerous elected officials from these areas joined the announcement.

"Health Enterprise Zones are a new and innovative way of addressing the health disparities that have plagued our communities for too long," said Lt. Governor Brown. **"My father was a doctor, and growing up, I had the opportunity to see first-hand the tremendous impact that quality affordable, healthcare can have on families and businesses. By establishing Health Enterprise Zones, we will be able to use incentives and innovation to expand access to care and address the geographic and racial disparities that exist in our most underserved communities."**

"Today's announcement about five Health Enterprise Zones is a positive step forward in improving community health, reducing overall health care costs, and eliminating racial and economic health disparities in communities across our state," U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski said. **"Study after study has shown that where you live matters in how long you live. Marylanders living in Baltimore's lower-income neighborhoods have worse health outcomes and lower life expectancies than those in more affluent communities. For instance, people who live in Upton/Druid Heights live 30 years less than those who live in the greater Roland Park area of North Baltimore. This is not only incredibly troubling, it's unacceptable. We must do more to improve the overall health and well-being of individuals living in these communities. We must better ensure access to medical care and healthy food, while also working to limit exposure to violence and environmental hazards."**

"I am committed to better health for all Marylanders and addressing disparities is critical to that effort," said U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin, who authored provisions in the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) to eliminate health disparities. **"I want to thank Lt. Governor Brown for his leadership and innovation on this truly unique approach, which I believe should serve as a model for the rest of the nation."**

"I am very pleased to hear that the West Baltimore Primary Care Access Collaborative will be one of the first Health Enterprise Zones in the State of Maryland," commented Congressman Elijah E. Cummings. **"I commend all of the partners for their exciting proposal, and I thank Governor O'Malley, Lt. Governor Brown, and the State of Maryland for supporting this creative approach to addressing unacceptable health disparities."**

Specific HEZ proposals included:

- MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, *Greater Lexington Park*: The proposal for the Greater Lexington Park seeks to improve public health outcomes in the Lexington Park, Great Mills, and Park Hall communities of St. Mary's County, areas experiencing a dearth of primary care physicians. The proposal includes a new community health care center and five new primary care practitioners, one psychiatrist, and two licensed social workers in the Zone. Innovative strategies include the development of a "health care transportation route" to address barriers to accessing health care in this rural area of the state.
- Dorchester County Health Department, *Competent Care Connections*: The proposal for Competent Care Connections seeks to improve public health outcomes in Dorchester and Caroline Counties, two jurisdictions with some of the worst health outcomes in the state, by adding 18 new providers in the Zone, and creating a new mobile mental health crisis team. The proposal is innovative in its focus on targeting individuals who visit hospital emergency departments for behavioral health conditions, and efforts to build a new community health workforce in the Mid-Shore region.
- Prince George's Health Department, *Capital Heights*: The proposal submitted by Prince George's County Health Department focuses on Capitol Heights, a neighborhood that leads the county in poor health outcomes, including low birth weight, late/no prenatal care, and teen births, and is comprised of 95 percent racial/ethnic minorities. This proposal would create five new patient-centered medical homes in the Zone to serve a minimum of 10,000 residents, and would add a total of 25 new providers.
- Anne Arundel Health System, *Annapolis*: The Anne Arundel Health System proposal focuses on a specific underserved area in downtown Annapolis with high rates of emergency room utilization, hospital admissions and re-admissions, and a large volume of medical 911 calls. This proposal establishes a new patient-centered medical home (PCMH) inside of a senior housing complex by adding one full-time physician, two full-time medical assistants, and one full-time case manager.
- Bon Secours Baltimore Health System, *West Baltimore Primary Care Access Collaborative*: This proposal focuses on expanding access to primary and preventative care and creating a community health infrastructure to serve residents in West Baltimore, a community facing some of the highest disease burden rates and worst social determinants of health care in the state. The proposal would support the recruitment of 18 new primary care professionals, deployment of eleven community health workers, and would build access to community health resources in the Zone, including access to healthy food retailers and exercise facilities.

"Lt. Governor Brown has been working tirelessly to ensure that there are no forgotten communities in Maryland, and these Health Enterprise Zones are going to make a significant impact on cities and towns throughout our state," said Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam. **"As a Registered Nurse, I've seen first-hand the impact that quality, affordable health care can have on a neighborhood and this program is going to put resources into the neighborhoods that need them most. Over the past 18 years in the House of Delegates, I've focused on ending health disparities in Maryland, and thanks to this legislation and the Lt. Governor's leadership, I believe we are one step closer to finishing that important work."**

"Chronic diseases, rising health care costs, and health disparities are national problems," said Dean E. Albert Reece, M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A. of the University of Maryland School of Medicine and Chair of the Health Disparities Work Group that proposed the development of the HEZ initiative. **"Health Enterprise Zones are a unique, community-based intervention that can serve as a model for the rest of the country and illustrate the solutions to national problems can be found locally."**

The HEZ program was established by the Maryland Health Improvement & Health Disparities Reduction Act, signed into law in April 2012. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Community Health Resources Commission issued a Call for Proposals in October 2012 through which community organizations and local health departments could apply for HEZ designation status, to be awarded on a competitive basis.

Applications were evaluated based on a set of 13 review principles by an independent HEZ Review Committee comprised of experts in the fields of public health, health disparities, and health care delivery. Areas designated as HEZs will have access to a range of incentives that include state income tax credits; hiring tax credits; loan repayment assistance; priority entrance into the state's Patient Centered Medical Home Program; priority for available state electronic health record grant funding; additional grant funding from the Community Health Resources Commission; and capital grant support.

"It's inspiring to see communities come together to tackle unacceptable health disparities," said DHMH Secretary Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein. **"With the implementation of these first five Health Enterprise Zones, Maryland is investing in smart ideas to improve health and reduce costs."**

"The Commission is delighted and honored to support the Health Enterprise Zone Initiative," commented John A. Hurson, Chairman, Maryland Community Health Resources Commission. **"These designations will expand access to health care in underserved areas of the state."** Over the last seven years, the Commission has awarded 110 grants, totaling \$26.2 million, supporting programs in all 24 jurisdictions of the state. The programs have collectively provided access to health care services for more than 105,000 Marylanders.

For additional information about the HEZ Initiative, please visit <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/healthenterprisezones/SitePages/Updates.aspx>.

Lt. Governor Brown leads the O'Malley-Brown Administration's efforts to reduce costs, expand access, and improve the quality of care for all Marylanders. Under the leadership of Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown, Maryland has implemented reforms that have expanded health coverage to more than 365,000 Marylanders, half of whom are children, established Maryland's Health Benefit Exchange, and put the State in position to maximize the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Independent analysis by the Hilltop Institute at the University of Maryland Baltimore County has found that implementation of the ACA will benefit the state's budget by \$672 million through 2020, generate more than \$3 billion in annual economic activity, cut the number of uninsured in half, and create more than 26,000 jobs.

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