



# MARYLAND ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

ABLE, RESPONSIVE FAMILY PHYSICIANS SERVING THEIR COMMUNITIES

June 4, 2015

The Honorable Larry Hogan  
Governor of Maryland  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

Dear Governor Hogan,

The Maryland Academy of Family Physicians is the 1400-member chapter of the national 110,000-member American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP, [www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)). The vision of The Maryland Academy of Family Physicians (MAFP, [www.mdafp.org](http://www.mdafp.org)) is “Able, Responsive Family Physicians Serving Their Communities.” Our mission, as we aspire to that vision, is “To support and promote Maryland family physicians in order to improve the health of our State’s patients, families and communities.”

As Family Physicians many of us were shocked to witness the events that occurred in response to the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore at the end of April. The communities that were involved are home to patients we serve, and what affects them affects us. On behalf of the Maryland Academy of Family Physicians and the patients we serve across the state of Maryland, I would like to thank the Governor for swift action to protect the residents of the city of Baltimore during the protests in response to the death of Freddie Gray.

The protests shined a light on the poverty, lack of opportunity, and social injustice that inner city communities face not just in Baltimore, but across the United States. Baltimore is not the first city where

Kisha N. Davis, M.D.  
*President*

Patricia A. Czapp, M.D.  
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tensions between the community and the police have erupted in a destructive way.

We are Family Physicians who care about our patients and the communities they live in. Health outcomes are tightly tied to community and we know that inner-city Baltimore residents have higher rates of asthma, heart disease and cancer, and a life expectancy that is as much as 20 years lower than the national average. The WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health concluded that “the social conditions in which people are born, live and work are the single most important determinants of good health or ill health, of a long and productive life, or a short and miserable one.” “Just as important, health is necessary for well-functioning societies. If a population does not have a decent level of health, it is very difficult to ensure economic prosperity, political participation, collective security and so forth<sup>ii</sup>.” Health and social justice go hand in hand. One cannot exist without the other.

While many social determinants fall outside the scope of traditional medicine, we Family Physicians are regularly charged to treat the downstream health consequences that result from these inequalities. Addressing education, policing, housing, unemployment, etc. is important as these factors that strongly impact the health of our patients. Reducing disparities in these areas would improve community health and unlock the human potential harbored in our communities.

We support efforts by the State of Maryland for initiatives such as Health Enterprise Zones that address health disparities in our neediest communities. We encourage continued funding of programs such as these that improve health by addressing underlying societal factors. We strongly support efforts to improve relationships between police

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and the community through community policing initiatives which have shown success elsewhere in decreasing tension, so that we don't see the protests in Baltimore or other communities erupt in the way they did this past April.

Lastly, Maryland's Family Physicians want to be a part of the solution. The MAFP leadership lends its input and support to the planning and implementation of solutions designed to promote health equity in Maryland. Family Physicians have strong connections and trust in their communities. Our Family Physician leaders are ready to partner with communities and local government to create solutions that positively impact health outcomes. We offer ourselves as a resource to address the social injustices and health disparities that ultimately affect our patients.

Sincerely,

Kisha N. Davis, MD, MPH, FAAFP  
President  
Maryland Academy of Family Physicians

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<sup>i</sup> *Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health.* Geneva: World Health Organization; 2008. Available from:

[http://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/index.html)

<sup>ii</sup> Gostin, Lawrence. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 2011;89:78-78. doi: 10.2471/BLT.10.082388