



Maryland Public Health Association
**Advancing the vision of healthy Marylanders
living in healthy communities.**

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) stands by the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus, the Maryland NAACP, and other lawmakers and organizations calling for the resignation of State Delegate Mary Ann Lisanti (Harford County).

MdPHA is an organization of public health advocates, professionals, and community leaders who are committed to upholding principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in order to advance a health equity agenda for our state. As advocates for health equity, and recognizing the direct impact discrimination has on the health and well-being of Black communities and other populations of color, MdPHA uses a racial justice framework to improve the public health conditions for all Marylanders through research, political advocacy, community engagement, and education.

We were gravely disappointed and troubled to learn on February 25th that Delegate Lisanti used a racial slur to describe the African American/Black communities of Prince George's County. She went on to attempt to both underplay the impact of the behavior and normalize the use of the slur, which is just as (if not more) troubling as her use of the word. Words have power, and slurs, especially those rooted in our history of brutal chattel slavery and segregation, have the power to create and reinforce systems of oppression. In the context of public health, Delegate Lisanti's use of the slur can be read as evidence of the racism that still permeates Maryland's public policy-shaping institutions, cuts across party lines, and contributes to the persistence of health inequities.

Delegate Lisanti's resignation would be a critical first step in acknowledging the real harm that individually-mediated racism can have on individuals and on our communities. The legislature should not stop there. Delegate Lisanti's actions are proof of the greater need for anti-racism trainings for all lawmakers and the imperative for the Maryland General Assembly to inventory and actively dismantle any institutional and programmatic practices that continue to reinforce structural racism. MdPHA is able to provide insights on the intersection of health, race, and inequity. Our lawmakers have a responsibility to advance racial equity in our communities and to reckon with the latent racism that is allowed to fester within our lawmaking bodies. Until then, we will not achieve health equity, and MdPHA will not rest.

On behalf of the Maryland Public Health Association Board of Directors