



Maryland Public Health Association's Legislative Priorities

At the annual meeting of the Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) in October 2017, we polled our members about what matters most to them in policymaking. Our legislative priorities for 2018 reflect the polling results and the sentiments expressed by our Advocacy Committee. The theme of the meeting, "Changing Climate, Changing Health," yielded a robust discussion about public health policy improving health outcomes and quality of life for all Marylanders. Climate change is a serious threat to human health, impacting allergy seasons, the spread of vector borne diseases, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and property damage. In the face of federal uncertainty, MdPHA will support state actions that protect our air and water quality in the face of a changing climate.

Health Equity:

Health equity is a [guiding priority](#) and [core value](#) for us. MdPHA will prioritize policies that address health equity. Healthy People 2020, the nation's health objectives for the current decade, defines health equity as the "attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health and health care disparities."

Priority Bills:

Earned Sick Leave - veto override

- All workers deserve paid sick days so that no one faces the impossible choice of providing for their family or taking care of their health or their family's health. We support a veto override early in the 2018 session to move forward implementing the bill passed by Maryland's legislature in 2017.

Tobacco 21

- Increasing the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products will reduce initiation in younger kids, and will help prevent deadly lifelong habits. Reducing smoking rates will then reduce cancer rates, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and reduce health care expenditures.

Prescription Drug Affordability

- Prescription drug prices, and their associated impact on health care costs across the board are a huge burden on Marylanders. We need laws guaranteeing consumer knowledge on best prices available and establishing a process to determine the appropriate cost of high priced, life-saving medications.

Lowering Maryland's Blood Lead Action Level for Children

- There is no safe level of lead exposure and the effects of lead poisoning are irreversible. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention set a reference blood lead level of 5 µg/dL, but Maryland law does not require intervention until children have levels of 10 µg/dL. Our action level should be at the CDC reference level.

Dental Therapy Licensure

- Despite recent progress on expanding access to health care, many Maryland residents still struggle to get dental care. Dental therapists, a type of midlevel dental professional, are a critical component because they can help dentists address the untreated tooth decay for thousands of residents. This legislation would authorize dental therapists to drill and fill decayed teeth, activities currently limited to dentists.

MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association (APHA), a 142-year-old professional organization with more than 50,000 members. MdPHA has members throughout the state, including from our state and local health departments. We organize strong, active networks for the public's health, and we advocate for sound policies in Annapolis.
