Dear MdPHA Members,

I hope this newsletter finds you well. The events of the past several weeks combined with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic have been nothing short of never-reckoning and traumatic for many of us. Personally, I have found it difficult to find the words to accurately describe all the emotions I’ve been feeling. It has also been difficult being the mother of young black men who have experienced so much violence and injustice against the African-American community that at the ages of 14 and 19 they too are fed up and angry and think enough is enough. Yet in the midst of all the trauma, anger, and fear we can still find a silver lining.

Cases of Covid-19 are slowly decreasing across Maryland. The number of available testing sites continue to increase, along with contact tracing. Racism is now being seen for what it is - a public health crisis rooted in economic, political, and social injustice - and people worldwide from all walks of life are joining together in solidarity for Black, Brown, and people of color. And perhaps the best silver lining of all, GRADUATION!!!!

I know the graduating class of 2020 did not have the senior year they expected. For many the last few months of school was more traumatic and stressful than fun and enjoyable. While that may be true, remember this - you did it! As difficult as it may have been you still did it! Nothing, not even corona, could take that away from you. And while the timing of this pandemic may not have been the best, consider the real-world, real-time public health lessons it has, and continues to teach you. It’s easy to focus on the negative, especially when it’s all over the news and social media, but I encourage you to find the silver linings.

Congratulations again to the class of 2020. Continued appreciation to those on the front-lines. And stay encouraged everyone!

Respectfully,

Maryland Public Health Association
Marina Gettas, DrPH, MPH President
Francine Baker President-elect
MdPHA is committed to finding innovative ways to help our community during the coronavirus pandemic. We’ve taken this moment to refocus and mobilize people with our valuable public health skills throughout Maryland, and reconnect us with our original purpose: to protect the public and prevent disease, illness, and unnecessary death.

In April, the new MdPHA Database of Public Health Professionals survey was launched to connect public health professionals and students with local service providers on the front-line, as a way to help deliver life-saving care, contact trace, provide patient education, and generally help nonprofits and local businesses. This survey is designed to recruit public health students, professionals, and retirees and enable MdPHA to differentiate specific areas of expertise, training, skills, languages, availability, and volunteer preferences (i.e., on-site support with PPE, contact tracing, risk communication, telehealth, training, call-center work, translation, etc.). Essentially, public health volunteers, with a tremendous range of expertise, can provide critical services now and into the future. This MdPHA volunteer service is now called the Public Health Action Alliance (PHAA).

Over the next few months we aim to find funding and more ways to connect Maryland’s first Public Health Action Alliance with local organizations that could use our support. If your organization would like a volunteer, please click here.

If you are an individual with public health skills to share, please respond to our MdPHA Public Health Action Alliance survey here.

If you have questions or wish to help, email Erica Weiss at ericahertzweiss@gmail.com.
Why Join MdPHA?

Membership has its perks!

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a state affiliate APHA. Members and organizational partners work in a variety of public health disciplines across our state, from health promotion, to environmental health, epidemiology, administration, and advocacy. Together we aim to develop healthy communities in Maryland through service, academia, and our local and state governments. Joining MdPHA enables you to network with public-health minded individuals, organizations, and professionals who envision a healthy and equitable life for all Marylanders.

We have a louder voice when our membership is strong. Please click here to join MdPHA today if you aren’t yet a member or need to renew: just $50/year for professionals, $25/year for students and retired pros.

Your MdPHA Membership has its perks:

Professional Development
- Leadership opportunities via committee participation and the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee
- Mentoring and internships with representatives from over 50 organizations
- Resources and activities through the American Public Health Association Council of Affiliates

Networking
- Access to over 100 public health professionals, students, and elected officials across the state
- Access to membership-only events and meetings
- Yearly networking events with state legislators
- Connections with partner organizations to promote healthy communities

Advocacy
- Updates on current national, state and local legislation affecting public health in Maryland
- An opportunity to submit written and oral testimony
- Opportunities to make recommendations on positions and develop the annual MdPHA Advocacy Agenda

Communication
- Access to our quarterly newsletter - with information on how to get involved, networking opportunities, employment opportunities, legislative updates, local MdPHA events, and APHA updates (this is a special "open" edition).
- Advocacy alerts and job notifications from MdPHA

Discounts
- Reduced registration rates for MdPHA’s Annual Conference and other MdPHA events
- Free access to obtain CEUs at the MdPHA Annual Conference
- Access to funding support for trainings/conference, when available
- Free job postings for organizational members on our website with email notification for members

Save-the-Date: MdPHA Summer Social, Wednesday, July 8, 4 PM

Join us for a Virtual Summer Social on July 8 at 4pm! We will have a group de-stress session and fun networking activities, organized by your region Maryland. Register in advance for this virtual social.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the virtual social! Hope you can join us virtually!
**Member Spotlight**

*Nicole Becerra, MPH, CHES*
*MdPHA Treasurer*
*Health & Wellness Coordinator, Howard County Health Department*

**Tell us about your work in public health:** For the past 15 years, I’ve worked for the Howard County Health Department as a Health & Wellness Coordinator. There, I coordinate health promotion opportunities in the community, lead evidence-based self-management health programs, and provide community health presentations on topics about things like diabetes, hypertension, and aging well. I also sit on many boards in Howard County including the Local Health Improvement Coalition, Cancer and Tobacco Coalition, Access to Care Work Group, and the Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Action Group.

**Tell us how your job has changed during COVID-19:** When COVID-19 began, I was reassigned immediately to fulfill essential services within our department. Since I worked in the area of nutrition in a previous county, I was also asked to support nutrition services for older adults in the community. It has been sobering to witness the high levels of fear among older clients, and a challenge to provide them with virtual services. My office offers wellness talks, exercise classes, nutrition webinars, and more all online! It’s challenging to provide self-management/

health education resources during this time virtually, while also providing essential food services.

**Tell us about your education/career path:** I went to college later than others. I started in my mid-twenties because I was raising my siblings at the time. I entered the workforce before pursuing school, working as a pharmacy tech and as office support staff for local government. I first attended Anne Arundel Community College for my Associate’s degree in Human Service, and then the University of Maryland Baltimore County, starting in the Social Work program. I later switched to major in Health Administration and Policy with a minor in Social Welfare. After that I enrolled in George Washington University’s distance learning program for my Masters in Public Health, concentrating in community health. For twelve years, and during undergrad and graduate school, I worked as a program coordinator for Anne Arundel County government supporting a volunteer-based program for low income seniors, then in the nutrition program. After obtaining my MPH, I started my job with Howard County as their Health & Wellness Coordinator.

**What do you see in the future for local health department in the post-COVID era:** I think the future of government services will be more accessible virtually, which is great. Many local agencies lacked the technology or had methods that were outdated. Adapting to health care delivery during COVID was a forced change that produced amazing results, illustrating the ability of organizations to still reach and provide for the community via virtual methods.

**What advice do you have for students:** While the pandemic is scary, it provides a great time to see the field of public health in action, and needs have never been greater. Organizations are looking for inventive ways to still provide goods and services. Public health students have the knowledge and creativity to meet that demand during these trying times.

**Tell us what you feel are the greatest benefits to membership in MdPHA:** I appreciate the sense of connectivity to other public health professionals, and also appreciate how diverse and translatable public health is through other sectors and work settings. MdPHA offers members the ability to network, resource, and engage with others. I enjoy serving as Treasurer and getting to know the inside and outside of our professional association.
Maryland is the richest state in the nation* but COVID-19 has caused more Marylanders than ever to have a difficult time putting food on the table. Across the country, families that are at or below 130% of the poverty level generally qualify for SNAP assistance (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly the food stamp program). However, SNAP eligibility and the amount of assistance provided, depends on household size, income, and living expenses so this guideline is not always a strict rule. For example, in Maryland, some families up to 180% of the poverty level qualify for SNAP because of their high living expenses.

The Maryland Department of Human Services estimated receiving approximately 70,000 applications for SNAP this April alone, an historic increase from the average number of applications received in years prior. Enter Maryland Hunger Solutions, an organization that:

- Advocates on both the state and federal level to expand access and participation in SNAP and other nutrition programs for school meals, after-school/summer meals, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- For example, Maryland Hunger Solutions opposed the Trump Administration’s proposed changes to the public charge rule which limits benefits to mixed-status families, even if they they are eligible, since it causes fear for potential negative immigration-related consequences.
- Expands best practices, minimizes stigma, and engages in community outreach and education to connect people in need with important food-security programs.
- Assists Marylanders all across the state with SNAP application assistance.

Before the pandemic, there were thousands of Marylanders and millions of individuals around the country receiving the minimum SNAP benefit of $16 per month. Since April, thanks in part to Maryland Hunger Solutions, all SNAP recipients have been receiving the maximum amount of benefits allowed for their family size. Currently approximately 235,000 families that were not previously receiving the maximum SNAP allotment, can now benefit from it. Phone traffic went from dozens of calls a day to thousands a day in the early weeks of the pandemic, according to Director Michael J. Wilson.

“This change has made a huge impact for individuals and families struggling to make ends meet,” said Anti-Hunger Program Associate Julia Gross. “We know that SNAP has been shown to lift more families and children out of poverty than any other existing benefit program, so it has been critical during this time when so many people have lost either a portion or all of their income and may be in a position where they need nutrition assistance for the first time in their lives.”

While the pandemic brought on an unprecedented and widespread health and economic crisis, communities already struggling with food insecurity (low-income communities, as well as communities of color, immigrant populations, and older adults) have seen their disproportionate impacts intensified.

Want to help? If you’re interested in volunteering to help return calls or conduct SNAP applications with people, email Program Assistant, JD Robinson, at JDRobinson@mdhuniversalsolutions.org - You can participate in the next training.

You can also help support the advocacy efforts of the anti-hunger community by contacting our MD Senators to let them know you support the HEROES Act and all of the SNAP and nutrition provisions it entails. Check out their letter of support.

To receive news from Maryland Hunger Solutions on upcoming advocacy efforts, volunteer opportunities, and trainings, join the mailing list by emailing Julia Gross at jgross@mdhunsolutions.org.
Committee Updates

MdPHA’s committees have been busy working from home like you. We’ve been focused on covid19 efforts, working to build a database of public health professionals, updating our website, building our membership, and planning events.

If you’d like to get more involved, please consider: 1) joining a committee (with planning calls once/month) and/or 2) taking on a leadership position! See more:

Want to get involved with MdPHA, meet new colleagues, and help plan social events? The Membership Committee is looking for a Co-Chair. Interested? Contact current membership chair, Adriane Griffen for more details at agriffen@aucd.org.

The Communications Committee is looking for a Co-Chair. Interested? Contact current communications chair, Crystal Perez for more details at communications@MdPHA.org.

The Finance Committee is looking for members to help manage the MdPHA budget, help design fundraisers, and manage membership dues. Interested? Contact current finance chair, Nicole Becerra, at treasurer@MdPHA.org.

Local Advocacy: Baltimore City needs an equitable, accessible, efficient, multi-modal transit system which allows everyone to get where they need to go in a timely and safe manner, and to spur economic development for Black and Brown communities. The state has failed the City of Baltimore - time and time again, most notably with the Red Line. It is time for public transit decisions to be made at the local level - so the people who use public transit the most have a voice.

Sign this petition to support People Powered Public Transit - Baltimore City registered voters only.

The Program Committee is looking for members to help plan and develop the fall conference. Interested? Contact current program chair, Francine Baker, at fsbaker@gmail.com.

All MdPHA members are invited to join APHA and the Council of Affiliates in a webinar at 3 p.m. ET on Monday, June 29. Please RSVP here.

APHA Executive Director Georges Benjamin, MD, will offer a statement about the role of Affiliates in addressing COVID-19, followed by a Q&A. Then, you can stick around for a talk with APHA Conventions Director Anna Keller and Affiliate leaders to talk about the logistics of taking annual meetings virtual.

*Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and the Bureau of Labor Statistics
Every Monday at 12 Noon, MdPHA has been joining the Pennsylvania Public Health Association and Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association for a “Public Health Hangout” to discuss various issues in public health. Topics range from strategies to reopen states and cities safely, to how the pandemic has affected recent graduates entering the workforce amid some of the highest unemployment rates. It’s a great way to connect with other public health-minded folks who are working on different strategies to help their state through the pandemic. Registration is required and the link is sent out to MdPHA members each week. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information for the webinar. Please email sshell@phmc.org for any suggestions or questions about topics or how to join.

Covid19 Contact Tracing Resources
Contact tracing intends to break the chain of transmission of infectious diseases. The following courses/trainings teach how to interview people diagnosed with the virus, identify contacts who may have been exposed, and provide guidance for two weeks of self-quarantine:
- Johns Hopkins University- COVID-19 Contact Tracing: Free (or $49)
- Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC): Free
- Public Health Learning Navigator: Offer CEUs to CPH (Certified Public Health)
- COVID-19 for Community Health Workers

Ways to Educate Yourself on Black Oppression
Make sure to support your black-owned, BIPOC-owned, and female-owned local bookstore. A good list of anti-racist literature has been compiled at The Stacks.

Maybe you don’t have time to read or listen to audible books. If so, shows and movies may be more your style. Check out the following list (compiled by @unity.celeste on Instagram):
- Explained: The Racial Wealth Gap. This episode explains the concept of white privilege
- Time: The Kalief Browder Story. This true crime docuseries is about a teenager wrongfully charged with theft and jailed.
- When They See Us. This true crime docuseries is based on the Central Park jogger case where 5 teenagers were wrongfully convicted of a crime
- 13th. This documentary analyzes the criminalization of Black people and the US prison system.
- Who Killed Malcolm X?. This is a biographical film about Malcolm X.

Equity Resources
- APHA is hosting a webinar series with an in-depth look at racism and how it drives the social determinants of health and equity.
- Check out the bystander intervention guide from the Southern Poverty Law Center.
- The National Equity Project has put together a series of webinars to help bring equity into your organization and workplace.

Public Health Job Openings
- Maryland Contact Tracer, NORC https://karier.co/amp/a3b?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic
- Community Health Specialist, Johns Hopkins https://jobs.hopkinsmedicine.org/career-areas.html
- Public Health positions through USA Jobs https://www.usajobs.gov/Search/Results?k=public%20health