

Healthcare Testimonial:

It is known that one's environmental factors can adversely impact one's health and affect population health. As a community member, health care professional, and member of the NAACP's health care committee it is our strategic duty to make environmental health a top health priority. Our goal should include educating community members on the risk factors on environmental hazards, advocating for community change to support improved health and living, and voting for bill changes. Data shows that environmental hazards including: chemical safety, air pollution, climate change and natural disasters, lack of accessibility to healthcare, infrastructure issues, and poor water quality can lead to other health issues which can have a lasting impact on one's life, and even death. Optimizing and advocating for environmental health in communities can reduce exposure to disease, improve health equity initiatives, improve health, and improve overall quality of life for the vulnerable. With that being said, we often don't globalize the outstanding work that is being done by local organizations like the Sierra Club and the St. Mary's County Health Department. The St. Mary's County Health Department has done a great job with initiating the BreatheWell St. Mary's Program. The BreatheWell is a comprehensive air quality monitoring and health education initiative for St. Mary's County. Through this initiative, outdoor air sensors have been installed across the county that will measure particulate matter, ozone, nitrogen dioxide and other elements that may contribute to poor air quality and respiratory illnesses. SMCHD is now able to share real-time air quality data and recommended protective health actions for our community members. Our work with environmental health initiatives allows us to reduce healthcare disparities, eliminate social and systemic barriers, and promote public health awareness.

-Michelle Pottinger; NAACP Committee Member