Commitment to Racial Equity

The evidence is indisputable: racism—overt, implicit and structural—has had catastrophic consequences impacting health and life expectancy for generations. The COVID-19 pandemic shines a powerful light on racial inequities we've already known to exist in access to care and disparities in health outcomes.

Racism amounts to a public health crisis. Those who experience racism suffer undue, often constant stress, which has ill health effects. Racism also underlies social determinants of health such as housing, education, nutrition, employment and public safety. Inequities in access to health care, as well as in the quality and outcomes of care, are detrimental to the health of our whole community. Moreover, racism strains the resilience of our own health care workforce. Such inequities are wholly avoidable and unjust.

To dismantle racism and its very real, incapacitating effects, MHA leans on its mission, "To advance health care across our state and the health of all Marylanders." We had already begun the journey toward health equity; we will now redouble our efforts.

Maryland Hospital Association will:

- Partner with other aligned groups within and beyond the health care sector to secure adoption of public policies that promote racial equity in social, economic, environmental and other domains

- Conduct and disseminate research on ways to eliminate bias and remove disparities in health care and to achieve equitable health outcomes

- Support expanded access to health care for marginalized groups, such as prioritizing health care resource allocation for underserved populations and eliminating gaps in health insurance

- Engage in community conversations about race, social determinants of health, institutional bias, and ways to elevate community members' trust in the health care system

The governing body of MHA asks Maryland's hospitals and health systems to:

- Ensure that equity and inclusion are embedded in organizational values; operationalize these values through policy and practice; apply a racial equity lens in evaluating performance

- Teach leaders and associates how to understand and to speak about race; to become equipped to undo implicit bias and structural causes of poor health; and to practice culturally competent care

- Change the make-up of governing boards and leadership staffs to reflect the diversity of the community; identify and remove systemic barriers to advancement

- Measure racial disparities in specific areas of organizational performance and undertake formal efforts to reduce those disparities, with accountability for those responsible

- Collaborate with educational institutions to grow the number of health care professionals of color in Maryland

- Adopt racially equitable and inclusive approaches to purchasing and investment decisions

Meaningful change will take time. MHA and Maryland's hospitals and health systems will hold themselves accountable to fulfill these commitments. We will set metrics and periodically publish reports on progress.

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