



HB0309 - Public Health – Data – Race and Ethnicity Information

Presented to the Hon. Shane Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government
Operations Committee
January 26, 2021 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

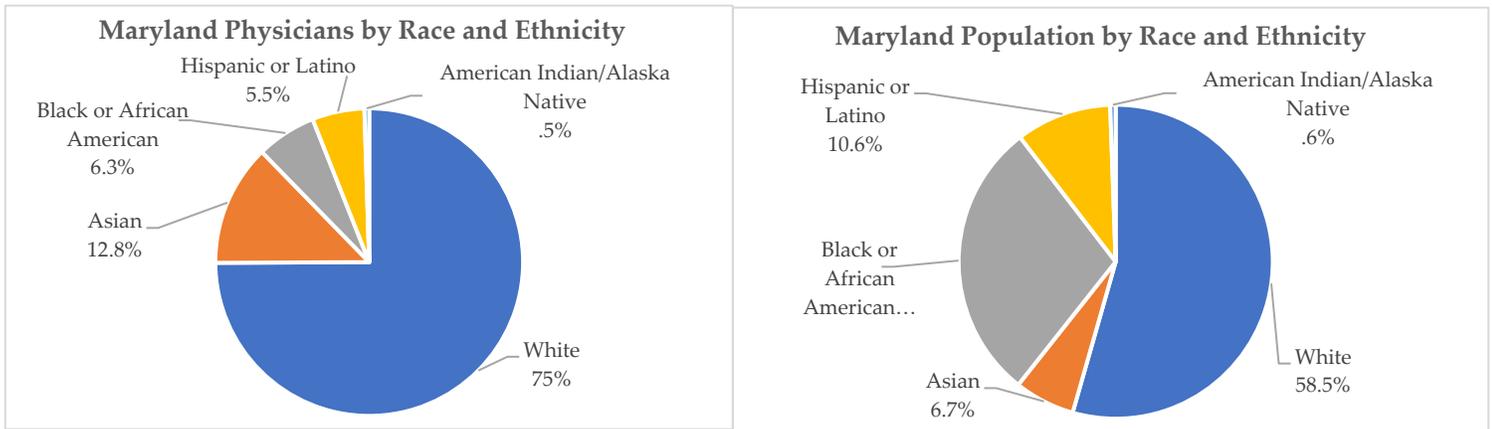
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the Health and Government Operations Committee to issue **a favorable report on HB0309 - Public Health – Data – Race and Ethnicity Information**, sponsored by Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. In ensuring that all Maryland residents receive quality reproductive health care, it is essential that patients, regardless of their racial and ethnic background, feel respected and understood by a diverse health care workforce. Collecting data on who provides and receives health care in this state is the first step to creating and funding initiatives to promote health equity.

The racial inconsistencies in maternal and infant mortality are a long-standing issue in the United States; today, research shows that Black newborns die at three times the rate of white newborns in post-birth hospital stays. However, a recent study found that when Black babies were cared for by Black doctors, their mortality rate was cut in half.¹ The higher rates of infant mortality for Black babies is a result of the deeply embedded structural racism within America, as well as the possible implicit biases that practitioners carry. The wellbeing of patients seeking reproductive care, as well as with other variations of health care, is linked to the racial concordance of their health care providers. Further diversifying the health care system in Maryland will enable patients to receive quality healthcare regardless of their race or ethnic background. Evidence-based public health and health equity initiatives must be guided by clean, quality data, and HB0309 will be an excellent resource in this regard.

A collection of racial and ethnic data for Maryland physicians reveals that minority groups are underrepresented in the health care workforce in comparison to the Maryland population. The lack of diverse representation in our healthcare system can affect health care delivery and ultimately lead to health disparities.

¹ Yancey-Bragg, N’dea. “Black Babies Are More Likely to Survive When Cared for by Black Doctors, Study Finds,” August 19, 2020. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/08/19/black-babies-more-likely-live-when-treated-black-doctors-study/3389521001/>



"Diversity in the Physician Workforce: Facts and Figures 2010." AAMC. Association of American Medical Colleges, Diversity Policy and Programs, 2010. <https://www.aamc.org/media/8046/download>

"U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Maryland." Census Bureau QuickFacts. Accessed January 20, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>

Collecting data on the race and ethnicity of licensed and certified health care practitioners will help to maintain a diverse health system which mirrors the demographics of Maryland residents. A study conducted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health found patients reported higher levels of satisfaction with physicians who were of their same race; additionally, when given the opportunity to choose their doctor, patients were significantly more likely to pick a health care professional of their same race.² These findings were similarly replicated by a team of Penn Medicine researchers in a study of more than 100,000 patients within University of Pennsylvania Health System between 2014 and 2017.³

The passage of HB0309 is a crucial step in establishing a diverse and impartial health care system in Maryland. Racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity within the health care workforce promotes a greater awareness of the social, cultural, and economic factors that influence patients, while also ensuring that minority patients receive adequate treatment and resources.⁴ Maryland's extremely diverse population is a source of great pride for our state. It is paramount that the health care system is representative of this diversity for the wellbeing of our residents.

For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB0309.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

² JH Bloomberg School of Public Health. "Study Finds More Satisfaction in Same-Race Doctor-Patient Relationships." Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, January 7, 2013. <https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2002/race-concordance.html>

³ "Study Finds Patients Prefer Doctors Who Share Their Same Race/Ethnicity – PR News." – PR News. Accessed January 20, 2021. <https://www.pennmedicine.org/news/news-releases/2020/november/study-finds-patients-prefer-doctors-who-share-their-same-race-ethnicity>

⁴ Spevick, Jeremy. "The Case for Racial Concordance between Patients and Physicians." Journal of Ethics | American Medical Association. American Medical Association, June 1, 2003. <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/case-racial-concordance-between-patients-and-physicians/2003-06>.