

**CITY OF BALTIMORE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Baltimore City Health Department Releases 2010 Health Disparities Report Card**

BALTIMORE, MD – (May 25, 2010) – The Baltimore City Health Department is releasing its 2010 Health Disparities Report Card, the first comprehensive examination of health disparities in the City.

The Report Card covers 30 major health indicators and evaluates disparities by gender, race, socioeconomic status, and between Baltimore and the state of Maryland, assigning letter grades based on disparity magnitude. The Report Card will help to highlight and direct attention to health indicators where additional efforts are needed to reduce and eliminate disparities.

The Report Card shows that while health has improved for all demographic groups in the City over the last decade, significant disparities remain between different groups. Indeed, disparities exist for 29 of the 30 health areas assessed. Of the 129 total grades reported in these areas, 21 (16%) are ‘D’s and 46 (36%) are ‘F’s. There are 30 ‘A’s (23%). Disparities by education or income level, two major social determinants of health, account for 26 of the 46 ‘F’s reported, demonstrating the profound impact socioeconomic status has on health.

“Social determinants play a critical role in shaping disparities in Baltimore, and this report card makes that pretty clear,” said Interim Commissioner Olivia D. Farrow. “This report card will really help us to better understand the different levels at which disparities manifest and what drives them.”

The Report Card reveals that significant disparities not only persist, but some are actually worse than they were in 2000, including many disparities in colon cancer, prostate cancer, heart disease and diabetes. One BCHD effort to help mitigate some of these disparities is the [Virtual Supermarket Program](#), which seeks to improve fresh food access, a critical social determinant that contributes to diet-related health disparities.

Other efforts are underway. Long-term solutions aimed at decreasing disparities and improving public health overall include the trans fat ban, the indoor smoking ban, efforts to reduce salt intake, and the Health Department’s Cardiovascular Health Disparities Initiative.

“The disparities we see in Baltimore are largely driven by the underlying social and economic conditions in which our residents live, work, and play—and an unhealthy food environment is an example,” said Acting Chief Epidemiologist Alisa Ames. “These conditions are shaped by policies and systems from housing and education, to labor and zoning. As such, eliminating health disparities in Baltimore will only be possible through collaborative efforts involving city agencies, businesses, community organizations and institutions.”

The Health Department will release Health Disparities Report Cards every other year in order to monitor progress in efforts to eliminate health disparities in Baltimore.

A copy of the 2010 Health Disparities Report Card can be downloaded from the Health Department's Website, <http://www.baltimorehealth.org>.

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