



Maryland  
Hospital Association

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## ***A Breath of Fresh Care Campaign Aims to Educate, Empower Health Care Consumers***

**Elkridge, Md.** — The Maryland Hospital Association, along with multiple partners – AARP Maryland, the Maryland Citizens’ Health Initiative, NAACP Maryland, Young Invincibles and others – are launching a campaign to educate and empower Marylanders in a new era of health care.

The campaign, *A Breath of Fresh Care*, features several “health engagement” tools for Marylanders who would like to know more about how health care is changing and about how they can partner with health care providers to take a more active role in staying healthy before they need care, being empowered during care, and remaining healthy after care. The tools include:

- A new website, [breathoffreshcare.org](http://breathoffreshcare.org), that is a statewide clearinghouse of hospital information that includes direct links to:
  - Every hospital’s patient bill of rights
  - Information on how to navigate the health care system, from interacting with your physician to understanding medical bills
  - Wellness and chronic disease management initiatives for your local community hospital
  - Contact information where consumers can register a complaint or concern
- A series of statewide educational forums, kicking off on Sept. 14, to educate Marylanders about these changes, to encourage use of these tools, and to encourage participation in the Maryland Faith Health Network – a prime example of Maryland’s health care transformation that brings together congregations and care providers to help serve those with health needs
- Strategic partnerships with AARP Maryland, the Maryland Citizens’ Health Initiative, NAACP Maryland, Young Invincibles, and other organizations that will help share information with their members and constituents

“Health care in Maryland is evolving by leaps and bounds; gone are the days when consumers sat on the sidelines, detached from their care,” said Carmela Coyle, President & CEO of the Maryland Hospital Association. “Health care in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is about patients; hospitals and other providers are looking to their patients and communities like never before as *partners in health*. Simply put, to enable Marylanders to lead long, healthy lives, we need their help.”

Vincent DeMarco, President of the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, pointed to the Maryland Faith Health Network as a "living example" of health care evolution in real time. "The fact that a hospital system, dozens of faith congregations, and, really, an entire community, can rally around a powerful idea is incredible," he said. "This is what health care should be – congregations, care providers, and friends and neighbors pitching in to make communities healthier. This is effective because so many people are so deeply invested in making it work."

Maryland State Conference NAACP President Gerald Stansbury said the impact of involvement from the faith community in improving health care cannot be overstated. "Because congregation members are already trusted members of their communities, the message they deliver and the support they provide to help individuals with health care is readily accepted. That is an excellent starting point to begin to meet the needs of so many who still do not receive the health care they need and deserve."

Hank Greenberg, AARP Maryland State Director, said his organization is committed to getting patients the information they need to navigate a changing health care system. "It's encouraging that so many organizations are coming together around a universal goal to improve the overall health of Marylanders. For example, recent passage of Maryland's CARE Act allows incoming patients the opportunity to designate a caregiver in the hospital record, and gives caregivers the opportunity to follow the progress of a patient and learn how to best provide care at home. Informed family members or others who are designated caregivers are essential for full and speedy recovery following a hospital stay."

Erin Hemlin, National Training Director for Young Invincibles, an organization dedicated to empowering young people with health care information, said it's essential that all demographics understand how the health care landscape is evolving, so that they can make smart decisions about providers and settings when receiving care. "While younger people may utilize health care less than other groups, education early on in their health care experience is critical to developing smart habits for the future," she said.

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### **About the Maryland Hospital Association**

*The Maryland Hospital Association is the advocate for Maryland hospitals, health systems, and their patients before legislative and regulatory bodies. Its membership is composed of community and teaching hospitals, health systems, specialty hospitals, veterans' hospitals, and long-term care facilities. For more information, visit [www.mhaonline.org](http://www.mhaonline.org).*