

Members of Congress, Public Health Experts and Community Leaders Convene in Chicago to Discuss Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities

Tobacco, Obesity, Stem Cells, HIV/AIDS, Immigrant Health and Environmental Health to be Addressed

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CHICAGO - Members of Congress, public health experts, community leaders and citizens of Chicago will convene tomorrow, Saturday, July 23, to address racial and ethnic health disparities in the areas of tobacco, obesity, blood stem cell transplantation, immigrant health, HIV/AIDS and environmental health. The one-day summit at the University of Illinois at Chicago is sponsored by the American Legacy Foundation®, the Coalition to Promote Minority Health (CPMH), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and a consortium of health plans and associations that includes America's Health Insurance Plans, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, Aetna, United Health Group and Wellpoint.

Tobacco, obesity, and HIV/AIDS are among the nation's leading public health issues. These epidemics disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minority communities. Many of these communities also have limited access to health care services. Those that do have access often must overcome substantial barriers to quality services including providers who lack cultural or linguistic competence. Tomorrow's summit will include open panel discussions in order to identify possible solutions to the unequal toll these health problems have on specific populations.

"We are pleased that the sponsors have chosen to hold the third annual Tri-Caucus Minority Health Summit at the University of Illinois in Chicago, right in the middle of one of the nation's largest health care districts," said U.S. Representative Danny Davis, who is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus and represents the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and the Chicago Medical District in Congress. "I can think of no better venue in the city for highlighting the need for more resources to eliminate these health disparities."

"As Attorney General, I take very seriously my responsibility to represent all of the residents of Illinois. One of the most pressing problems for many Illinois residents is access to affordable healthcare. I am committed to fighting on behalf of Illinois residents to ensure access to quality healthcare," said Attorney General Lisa Madigan.

The members of the United States Congress who are expected to attend the event include: Senator Barack Obama, Illinois; Representative Danny Davis, Illinois; Representative Mike Honda (Chair, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus), California; Representative Grace Napolitano (Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus), California; Representative Hilda Solis (Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Health), California; Representative Donna M. Christensen (Chair, Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust), Virgin Islands; Representative Madeleine Bordallo (Chair, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Health Taskforce), Guam; Representative Luis Gutierrez,

Illinois; Representative Jesse L. Jackson Jr., Illinois; Representative Bobby Rush, Illinois; Representative Raul M. Grijalva, Arizona; Representative Kendrick Meek, Florida; Representative Linda T. Sanchez, California; Representative Jan Schakowsky, Illinois; and Representative Julia Carson, Indiana.

For the second consecutive year, the American Legacy Foundation is a lead sponsor of the Tri-Caucus Minority Health Summit. "Tobacco-related illnesses are the leading preventable cause of the death in this country and it is not an equal opportunity killer," said Amber Hardy Thornton, executive vice president for Program Development at the American Legacy Foundation. "Because of the disproportionate toll of tobacco on minorities, our foundation stands committed to doing all that we can to shine a spotlight on this disparity and empower multi-cultural communities to break free of tobacco addiction."

Obesity is also an epidemic disproportionately impacting minority communities. Last year, the American Legacy Foundation released an analysis showing that obesity and tobacco addiction were two distinct epidemics among the most disadvantaged populations. The study serves as a stark reminder of the importance of confronting both epidemics.

"The Coalition to Promote Minority Health seeks to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities by promoting culturally-tailored obesity prevention programs in minority and underserved communities. Minorities are much more likely to be obese than their White counterparts, and as a result, are more likely to suffer and die from obesity-related illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes," said Daron Watts, founder of CPMH and partner at the law firm Sidley Austin Brown & Wood LLP. "The collaborative efforts of Summit participants will promote minority health on a scale that no single organization could achieve on its own."

Tomorrow's discussions will demonstrate the dire need for resources, such as smoking cessation clinics, consumer call lines and effective educational campaigns, to be made available for anyone who wants to live a healthy lifestyle or make positive changes in their own health and the health of their families.

"The mission of the Tri-Caucus Minority Health Summit is crucial to the future health of our communities," said UIC chancellor Sylvia Manning. "UIC shares this commitment through our teaching, research and clinical services. We're honored to host such a diverse group of experts to discuss eliminating health disparities, which pervade so many aspects of health care today."

American Legacy Foundation

The American Legacy Foundation is dedicated to building a world where young people reject tobacco and anyone can quit. Located in Washington, D.C., the foundation develops programs that address the health effects of tobacco use through grants, technical assistance and training, youth activism, strategic partnerships, counter-

marketing and grassroots marketing campaigns, research, public relations, and outreach to populations disproportionately affected by the toll of tobacco. The foundation's national programs include **Circle of Friends®**, **Great Start®**, a **Priority Populations Initiative**, **Streethery®** and **truth®**. The American Legacy Foundation was created as a result of the November 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) reached between attorneys general from 46 states, five US territories, and the tobacco industry. Visit www.americanlegacy.org.

Coalition to Promote Minority Health

The Coalition to Promote Minority Health (CPMH) is a national non-profit organization committed to eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities through obesity prevention. CPMH has designed culturally-tailored programs to encourage obesity prevention measures, such as healthy eating and regular physical activity, and educate minorities and underserved populations about the dangers of obesity and obesity-related diseases. CPMH seeks to provide more access to healthy lifestyles in minority and underserved communities by increasing the availability of affordable healthy products and improving the “walkability” and “playability” of neighborhoods. CPMH advocates public policies that support healthy living and public policy development practices that consider the needs of minority and underserved populations. CPMH's programs are the result of the collaborative efforts of community organizations, government agencies, political leaders, public health advocates, medical professionals and corporations.

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