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### **Joint Center Commends Baltimore City Health Department's Release of Health Disparities Report Card**

WASHINGTON, DC—The “2010 Baltimore City Health Disparities Report Card” released today by the Baltimore City Health Department represents a groundbreaking approach to comprehensively monitor health disparities in the city, according to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a research and policy institution that focuses on the concerns of people of color.

The report is intended to serve as a one-stop source for assessing major health indicators and identifying gaps among demographic groups, while also offering guidance in planning strategic policy, systems, and behavioral interventions aimed at eliminating health disparities in the City of Baltimore.

The report found that residents in Baltimore City fared worse on 13 of the 14 indicators when compared with the statewide population.

“It is a remarkable report and groundbreaking self-assessment that reviews trends over time in a number of indicators of the city, county, and state’s health,” said Dr. Brian D. Smedley, Vice President and Director of the Joint Center Health Policy Institute. “Its findings are a resounding call to action.”

Health disparities are a serious concern at the national, state and local levels. Baltimore has consistently fared worse than the rest of Maryland and the rest of the country on many health indicators, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, infant mortality, and asthma. These disparities are driven largely by differences in residents’ access to resources and opportunities that promote and enhance health. These health promoting and enhancing resources and opportunities are called Social Determinants of Health (SDoH), and include access to healthy food, healthy housing, safe neighborhoods, education, employment opportunities, and transportation—all of which are influenced by policy decisions.

“The report makes clear that health inequities are not just a problem for the city’s health department,” said Smedley. “Because these inequities are rooted in policy decisions around land use, housing, education, transportation and the like, local and state government agencies need to work together with communities in multi-sector partnerships to determine neighborhood health risks and resources. Community groups must shape the agenda.”

The Joint Center Health Policy Institute (HPI) is a pioneering program of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. HPI’s mission is to ignite a fair health movement that gives people of color the inalienable right to equal opportunity for healthy lives.

The Joint Center Health Policy Institute’s approach to reducing/eliminating health disparities involves identifying the complex underlying causes of health disparities and defining strategies to address these root causes. One way in which HPI addresses these issues is through *PLACE MATTERS*, a national initiative funded

through the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. *PLACE MATTERS* takes an approach that crosses disciplines in problem solving. Teams, comprised of business, public and private sector leaders are exposed to not only experts in community health and public health but also others in economic development, transportation, affordable housing, public policy and smart growth.

*PLACE MATTERS* has 16 teams across the United States, including one in Baltimore City. These teams are engaged in forming partnerships with major stakeholders in a variety of fields to make systemic changes that can lead to improved health status in their communities. Improving health status by tackling broad social problems such as a lack of affordable housing, inadequate schools, violence and anemic economic development combines social and medical theory. *PLACE MATTERS* is moving theory into practice by equipping communities with the tools to change the social conditions that impact health outcomes.

*The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is one of the nation's leading research and public policy institutions and the only one whose work focuses primarily on issues of particular concern to African Americans and other people of color. The Joint Center is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year. To learn more, please visit [www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org).*

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