

Elected Officials Session Synopsis

Presenter: Judith Burrell

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Teams represented: Alameda, Coahoma, King, Marlboro, Sharkey- Issaquena, San Joaquin Valley

The breakout session began with a summary of the Tuesday Capitol Hill visits by those who attended them.

Martin Luther King, Jr. County team members said they prepared for the meetings by agreeing upon message and a leave behind of Place Matters information. The team met with the state delegation, with no expectations and were pleasantly surprised at the welcome, the interest and the encouragement they received from several offices. It fortified their resolve to refine their message and meet with the Congressional district office staff. The King County Washington team also said they offered their assistance to their Congressional offices: to convene meetings on social determinants of health, to present or to facilitate discussions about the topic.

Jefferson County indicated their Congressional visits were similar in reception by Hill staffers. They did indicate that their message needed to be honed more definitely, but felt encouraged to move forward on that and meet with District Congressional offices

Marlboro County made an appointment with one Congressional office and ended up discussing Place Matters with two; the second was a chance meeting of a Clyburn staffer at a restaurant. Through this chance encounter, the team learned that Mr. Clyburn holds an annual meeting on health disparities in Charleston and they were encouraged to reach back in order to gain an invitation to that meeting. The team also acknowledged that their message needs to be refined, and discussed conducting a retreat to focus on this and several other team matters that will harness their energies more succinctly and in an agreed upon direction.

San Joaquin Valley also spoke of the interested and considerate reception they received from the several Congressional offices they visited. The team also thought the messaging and the intent of the day was an important experience for their ongoing efforts.

Alameda County concurred with much of the discussion and added that they went to Senate offices and received a good reception.

All the teams in the session mentioned the CBC Health BrainTrust as a possible missed opportunity for broadening the Place Matters base, because they were only part of it for one session. The thought it could be helpful to have been able to listen to other speakers as well as network with the Congressional Black Caucus members who sponsored and attended the event.

The teams all appreciated the experience of doing Capitol Hill visits in Washington and clearly understood it was a catalyst for them to become more comfortable with keeping elected officials apprised and involved in the Place Matters efforts at their local levels as well as at the national level. Many expressed a desire for the Health Policy Institute to take on a more visible national role in informing elected officials about the team efforts across the country to exponentially grow awareness of the effort at a faster and more comprehensive pace.