

MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution 33-15

INTRODUCED BY: Medical Student Section

SUBJECT: Public Health Implications of Affordable Housing Issues

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1 Whereas, The civil unrest that occurred in Baltimore, Maryland in April 2015 not only was triggered by  
2 the death of Freddie Gray and the dysfunctional relationship between law enforcement and citizens, but  
3 also reflected a long-standing dissatisfaction with the legacy of structural poverty and housing policy in  
4 Baltimore;<sup>1</sup> and  
5

6 Whereas, More than 550 per 10,000 housing units are vacant in Baltimore City, and almost 2500 per  
7 10,000 housing units are vacant in the Sandtown-Winchester and Harlem Park neighborhoods of  
8 Baltimore;<sup>1</sup> and  
9

10 Whereas, In Baltimore, the average time on the waiting list for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher  
11 program is almost ten years;<sup>2</sup> and  
12

13 Whereas, In Maryland, a minimum-wage worker would have to work a 138-hour work week in order to  
14 afford a two-bedroom rental unit at fair market rent;<sup>3</sup> and  
15

16 Whereas, Housing is an important social determinant of health as evidenced by the fact that homeless  
17 persons struggle under greater levels of physical disease, mental illness, and substance abuse than housed  
18 individuals;<sup>4-5</sup> and  
19

20 Whereas, Housing instability is associated with a lack of health insurance, poor access to a usual source  
21 of ambulatory care, postponement of needed medical care and medications, and increased emergency  
22 room use and hospitalizations;<sup>4-6</sup> and  
23

24 Whereas, Current AMA policy supports eradicating homelessness through clinically proven, high quality,  
25 and cost effective approaches and through the development of an effective national plan by appropriate  
26 organizations (H-160.903); therefore be it  
27

28 Resolved, That MedChi will adopt the AMA policy on eradicating homelessness (H-160.903) as MedChi  
29 policy and monitor the activities of the AMA on issues around housing and public health; and be it further  
30

31 Resolved, That MedChi work with policymakers and relevant stakeholders to study the public health  
32 implications of affordable housing and other issues that impact the public health of those who are  
33 homeless to identify evidence-based, cost-effective solutions to those issues.  
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36 As amended and adopted by the House of Delegates at its meeting on September 19, 2015.  
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38 **References:**  
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41 *American Medical Association*, 313(24): 2425-2426.

- 42 2. Baltimore County Office of Housing. (2014) Housing Choice Voucher Program. Available at  
43 <http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/housing/dsssec8.html>.  
44 3. National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2014) “2014 Hours at Minimum Wage Needed to  
45 Afford Rent.” Available at [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR2014\\_MW-Map.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR2014_MW-Map.pdf).  
46 4. Ku BS, Scott KC, Kertesz SG, and Pitts SR. (2010) Factors associated with use of urban  
47 emergency departments by the U.S. homeless population. *Public Health Rep*, 125: 398-405.  
48 5. Schanzer B, Dominguez B, Shrout PE, and Caton CL. (2007) Homelessness, health status, and  
49 health care use. *Am J Public Health*, 97: 464-469.  
50 6. Kushel MB, Gupta R, Gee L, and Haas JS. (2006) Housing instability and food insecurity as  
51 barriers to health care among low-income Americans. *J Gen Intern Med*, 21: 71-77.  
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53 **Relevant AMA Policy:**  
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55 **H-160.903 Eradicating Homelessness**

56 Our American Medical Association: (1) supports improving the health outcomes and decreasing the  
57 health care costs of treating the chronically homeless through clinically proven, high quality, and cost  
58 effective approaches which recognize the positive impact of stable and affordable housing coupled with  
59 social services; and (2) supports the appropriate organizations in developing an effective national plan to  
60 eradicate homelessness. (Res. 401, A-15)  
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