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Maryland's women have fought for health equity for decades. They were healthcare professionals, educators, community activists and mothers. Today, the future of caring, accessible and affordable health care for all is threatened. Will we take inspiration from our foremothers and step forward?



Above: Women's History graphic courtesy www.freepik.com

**Trailblazing women
throughout history**

**These Maryland women
devoted their time to
equitable health care. Look**

worked for equitable health access. It's not over yet.

People impacted by poverty, people of color, people who identify as nonbinary, and many others still experience shorter life expectancies, more maternal mortality and a host of preventable diseases.

Recently, MWHC Vice President Danita Terry hosted a discussion with Donna Hubbard McCree, PhD, MPH, RPh (Owner, NXLS4Health LLC) and Tekisha Dwan Everette, PhD., MPA, MPH, CPH (Trust for America's Health), two Maryland women who have been deeply involved with ensuring that quality and empathetic health care is a right.

To those who want to advocate for themselves or others, they offer several practical suggestions to affect policy changes. [See the recording here.](#)

- Poor treatment at a medical facility? No transportation to health care? Tell your story. Legislators and policy makers respond to stories more so than statistics. Put a face on the issues.
- Get involved in advocacy that matches your skills and strengths. Seek out faith-based, community and grassroots movements. For example, not everyone likes to testify in public, but there are also behind-the-scenes roles.
- Learn what your local representatives are doing for health equity. Remind them why they were elected. Write, phone, email and use social media.
- Seek out care that is respectful. Interview health care practitioners and change service providers if needed and possible. This is still your right, even in free clinics. Read reviews of practitioners and health care practices.
- Advocate for neighbors, friends and family who may not be able to do

to them (and many others) for inspiration.

Grace Snively (1913 - 2014) was a medical educator, civil rights activist, and community volunteer. As a volunteer medical educator with the American Cancer Society in segregated Hagerstown in the 1950s, she helped educate and reassure women of color who were fearful of taking Pap smears. To do this, Mrs. Snively went door-to-door handing out home Pap smear kits. She was also a civil rights leader, voter registration advocate and was a chief judge on the Washington County Election Board.

Harriet Lane Johnston (1830 - 1903) served as First Lady for her uncle, President James Buchanan and later married Baltimore banker Henry Johnston. The couple was heartbroken when they lost both of their young sons to illness. The Johnstons were determined to spare other families from this sorrow. Around 1883, they funded what would become the Harriet Lane Clinic, now located in Johns Hopkins Hospital's Children's Center. Mrs. Johnston insisted that children from all races, creeds and nationalities have access to care.

Dr. Bessie L. Moses (1893 - 1965) was a Johns Hopkins University obstetrician and gynecologist, and a pioneer in the birth control movement. She recognized that over-population was a threat and, in 1927, founded the Bureau for Contraceptive Advice, the first birth control clinic in Baltimore. Later called the Planned Parenthood Clinic, she remained director until her 1956 retirement. Dr. Moses trained both White and Black doctors in gynecology and contraception. She left a profound influence on equal access to reproductive care that endures today.

When then-nurse **Shirley Nathan Pulliam (1937 - present)** was helping a patient named Stella in Baltimore City's Bon Secours Hospital emergency room, she noticed a visible sign of possible breast cancer. Stella told her that she couldn't afford to see a doctor about the condition. The incident was a turning point for

this for themselves

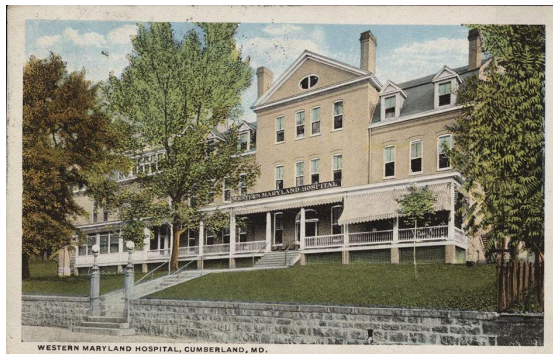
- Get to know the **Bill of Rights for Patients** and expect this level of care.
- **Vote and support voting rights and accessibility for all.**



Upcoming Supreme Court decision to impact Affordable Care Act preventative services

A lower court decision has invalidated Affordable Care Act preventative services to 150 million Americans, a severe blow to health equity. Read details from **Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University**.

Image by Jeff Kubina - Own work, Public Domain



In the late 1800s, a group of Cumberland women came together to plan a rest home for senior citizens in the community. The **Western Maryland Hospital** was opened and dedicated on November 21, 1892, in the presence of a local residents and religious leaders of various denominations.

According to a post on **AppalachianHistory.net** by Dave Tabler, the group included "Mrs. CJ Orrick, Mrs. William Shepherd, Mrs. PH Daughtrey, Mrs. Beverly Randolph, Mrs. ST Little, Miss Belle Resley, Mrs. S Hamburger, Mrs. Sussman Rosenbaum, Mrs. Simon Rosenbaum, Mrs. TL Darnell, Mrs. RI

Pulliam, who had come to the United States from England, where medical treatment was accessible to all. She later earned a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University and was elected as a State Delegate in 1994, serving for 25 years. She was a vocal supporter of health equity issues. Her book **Saving Stella: Notes from a Nurse Turned Legislator** was published in April 2024.

Prasanna Nair completed medical training in Delhi and began her medical residency in pediatrics at the University of Maryland Medical Center in 1960. She then spent her entire career there in various roles that focused on the health care and the unmet needs of children and adolescents, especially those affected by mothers with HIV/AIDS or substance use disorders. She encouraged medical students to enter pediatric specialties through the Junior Year Pediatric Clerkship, which she directed from 1985 to 2000. Her research was groundbreaking in understanding how HIV/AIDS impacts infants as well as their later developmental progress.

Valerie Thomas (1943 - present) was a Morgan State University graduate in physics and completed had a distinguished career at NASA as a mathematician and data analyst. Among several inventions and distinctions, she is credited with inventing and patenting the Illusion Transmitter, which creates a 3D optical illusion by using a system of concave mirrors to capture and project an image. This technology is used in satellite imagery, television and surgery.

Once known as a "Wilmington society girl" **Ellen La Motte (1873-1961)** decided to attend the Johns Hopkins Training School for Nursing and became a celebrated public health nurse. As the new lead of the newly formed Tuberculosis Division of the Baltimore Health Department, La Motte became the first woman to hold an executive position in Baltimore City. Her articles about tuberculosis work were published nationwide and she was a sought after speaker. La Motte believed women voters would advocate for changes that would

Morris, Mrs. JW Avirett, Mrs. Merwin McKaig, Mrs. MARF Carr, and Mrs. EH Welsh."

As the hospital evolved over the years into larger spaces and expanded services, women continued their advocacy and support for health services that fit the unique needs of a rural mountain community.

Go to the link to learn how this hospital, evolved to then serve injured railroad workers and, later, people throughout the community. "[The number of railroad accidents made the need for a hospital strongly felt](#)" (November 28, 2017.)

prevent the spread of diseases like tuberculosis. This belief led her to become involved in Baltimore's very active suffrage network. (Contributed by Amy Rosenkrans, PhD, MWHC Board)

"I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard . . . We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back." Malala Yousafzai



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