

# Groups: Health Disparities Still High in Communities of Color

Public News Service - MA | April 2010 |

April 6, 2010

BOSTON - April is National Minority Health Month - and a check-up on health care in communities of color in Massachusetts shows that the high cost of health disparities is still being paid by the less fortunate.

Gia Barboza, director of research and evaluation for the *Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative* in Roxbury, says that while the passage of health care reform in Massachusetts has helped thousands gain coverage, a health insurance card does not necessarily mean healthier outcomes.

"We see vast disparity continue, and that's because basically there's high co-pays, people can't take time off from work, and so it doesn't necessarily translate into good health."

Barboza says that poor health is linked to social and economic disadvantage, which she says is often overlooked.

Dr. Barton Laws, who is with the Institute for Clinical Research and Health Policy Studies at Tufts Medical Center and a member of the *Disparities Action Network*, says that national health reform will provide access to health care for 32 million people across the country.

However, he says, there is more work to do in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods...

"Poor neighborhoods tend not to have supermarkets where you can get fresh produce and healthy foods at a decent price, or the availability of opportunities for physical activities."

The *Disparities Action Network* at *Health Care For All* in Boston is working on the establishment of a permanent Office of Health Equity, which, once fully funded, would create a task force to address the root causes of health disparities.

**Monique Coppola, Public News Service - MA**