

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 27, 2022

CONTACT: Michelle Lovelace
Corporate Communications
301-790-8865 or 240-291-6828
Media@MeritusHealth.com

Healthcare leaders from 32 organizations join forces to reduce health disparities

Hagerstown, Md. – A group of committed healthcare leaders, representing 32 organizations across seven states are embarking on focused and intentional work to address health disparities among minority aging populations.

The newly developed collaborative, Leaders in Equity and Diversity (LEAD) Collaborative, with funding support from AARP, stemmed from the work of Meritus Health president and CEO, Maulik Joshi, Dr.P.H., who has committed to reducing health disparities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in rural Maryland and further.

The LEAD Collaborative, being led by Joshi, Deneen Richmond, President of Luminis Health Doctors Community Medical Center, and Arti Varanasi, president and CEO, Advancing Synergy, is focusing efforts to reduce disparities, address social determinants of health, and increase the diversity of leadership to accelerate results, with a commitment of sharing best practices and implementing bold solutions that reduce disparities by 2024.

This week, the leaders gathered in Hagerstown to set the foundation for learning and growing together.

“It is work that isn’t an option, or something that can be ignored,” Joshi explained as he started the session by reminding participants of “why” action is needed.

“I tend to go back to Vice President Hubert Humphrey’s quote, ‘The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped.’”

-MORE-

-PAGE 2/2-

“I believe government sets policies and direction, but healthcare providers take action. There are lots of people living in the shadows, begging the question, how do we as a healthcare entity, as an anchor of the community, how do we not just speak for everyone, but do?” he shared.

Coupled with this backdrop and the desire to accelerate change through meaningful action, each member of the LEAD Collaborative will commit to setting measurable goals in at least one of three key areas: reduce health disparities in the community; address social determinants of health, and increase diversity in their organization’s leadership.

Organizations will share progress on their efforts and learn practices from other collaborative members.

The discussion and learning of the session were captured by a graphic illustrator, who brought spoken issues to visual art, to help demonstrate the aligned goals and needs of the participating organizations.

For more information about the LEAD Collaborative or to join, please visit [MeritusHealth.com/AARPLead](https://www.MeritusHealth.com/AARPLead).

###

Meritus Health, Western Maryland’s largest health care provider, is located at the crossroads of Western Maryland, Southern Pennsylvania and the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. With over 3,000 employees, 500 medical staff members and 250 volunteers, Meritus Health serves over 200,000 residents of the tristate region. Meritus Medical Center has 327 beds and Meritus Medical group has over 160 providers. *More information can be found at www.MeritusHealth.com or visit our [Facebook page](#) or [LinkedIn page](#).*