FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MEDIA ADVISORY
Maryland Center for Health Equity & Cigna Announce Partnership to Promote Colorectal Cancer Screening through Prince George’s County Barbershops and Beauty Salons

WHAT: The Maryland Center for Health Equity (M-CHE) in the University of Maryland School of Public Health, and Cigna will announce a $200,000 grant from the Cigna Foundation to encourage colorectal cancer screening among African Americans through health promotion initiatives in barber shops and beauty salons in Prince George’s County. More than 50,000 people die each year from the disease. The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 135,000 people will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer this year. African Americans have the highest rate for new cases of colorectal cancer and are the most likely to die from it.

M-CHE will train barbers and hair stylists to educate their clientele about colorectal cancer and the importance of getting screened. Genetic counselors will also conduct family health histories onsite with customers.

A poetry reading sponsored by The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at UMD, is also planned. The Battle of and for the Black Face Boy, delves deep into our heritage and addresses what isn’t being said about race today.

WHO:
- Rushern L. Baker III, County Executive, Prince George’s County, Maryland
- Dr. Stephen B. Thomas, Professor, Department of Health Services Administration and Founding Director Maryland Center for Health Equity, University of Maryland School of Public Health
- Dr. Mary Garza, Assistant Professor/Associate Director, Center for Health Equity, School of Public Health, UMD
- Julia Huggins, President, Cigna Mid-Atlantic
- Dr. Christina Stasiuk, National Medical Director for Health Disparities, Cigna
- Fred Spry, Barber and Proprietor of The SHOP (barber shop) along with barber shop customers
- Erica Bondarev, Associate Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives, The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at UMD
- Nikky Finney, Poet/National Book Award-winner

WHEN: Saturday, November 1, 2014, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

WHERE: The SHOP, the program’s anchor barbershop at 5916 Riggs Road, Hyattsville, MD 20783

Background: Part of the Cigna Foundation’s World of Difference Grants program, the grant to the Maryland Center for Health Equity (M-CHE) will help establish the Health Advocates In-Reach and Research (HAIR) network in ten shops across the county, including neighborhoods in the Capitol Heights Health Enterprise Zone (HEZ). The project builds on M-CHE’s track record of engaging barbershops and beauty salons in health promotion within the community. Individuals ages 50 and older are most at risk for colorectal cancer. Family history, personal history and race are among the common risk factors. While colorectal cancer is often seen in people without a family history, one in five individuals who develop colorectal cancer has a family member who has been affected by the disease. Individuals with a first degree relative with the disease are also at increased risk for the disease. The Affordable Care Act designates colorectal cancer screening as one of the free preventive screenings, yet many people are not aware and do not seek screening in a timely manner.

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