



According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), minorities in this country bear a disproportionate burden of disease, injury, and disability. For minority populations, health disparities can mean lower life expectancy, decreased quality of life and loss of economic opportunities.

That disparity is what prompted the creation of the Arkansas Minority Health Commission (AMHC) in 1991.

Legislators were recently provided with an update of the work of the AMHC during a meeting of the Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee.

The Arkansas Minority Health Commission's vision is that minority Arkansans have equal opportunity and access to health, health care and preventive well care.

To accomplish this, the commission focuses on addressing existing disparities in minority communities, educating these communities on healthier lifestyles, promoting awareness of services and accessibility within our healthcare system, and making recommendations to the state.

Last year more than 20,000 health screenings were provided to Arkansans as a direct result of the work provided by the AMHC. These screenings test for everything from high blood pressure to cholesterol checks.

Outreach efforts include community forums and a monthly call in radio show with health professionals.

The commission also helps to promote wellness and health fairs around the state. Last year alone, their efforts reached more than 33,000 Arkansans.

In order to identify areas of improvement for access to health care, the commission issues an extensive report on the health care workforce in our state. This year's report identified 3 counties in our state that do not have a dentist. It also revealed

there are 16 counties in the state without a specialty physician and 16 counties without an optometrist.

The report also indicates that the racial and ethnic diversity in the state's population is not necessarily reflected in the healthcare system.

Annual reports like the one presented by AMHC help us to address disparities in the future legislative sessions. We've posted the entire report on our website [www.arkansashouse.org](http://www.arkansashouse.org).

You can also find a complete calendar of events hosted by the commission on their website [www.arminorityhealth.com](http://www.arminorityhealth.com)