

## PRESS RELEASE

### Health Disparities Focus of Congressional Black Caucus Institute Meeting in Charleston

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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Washington, DC — Health disparities among minority communities will be the focus of the annual conference of the Congressional Black Caucus Political Education and Leadership Institute (CBC Institute) in Charleston, June 7-9, 2002. The CBC Health Braintrust, the CBC Environmental Justice Braintrust and the National Environmental Policy Commission (NEPC) are conducting a two-day joint Listening Session on Health Disparities at the Medical University of South Carolina.

The Listening Session allows members of the CBC to take public comment that will be used to develop forward-thinking, comprehensive environmental and health policies that recognize and foster the unique relationship between environmental protection, human health, environmental justice and economic development.

The CBC Health Braintrust is chaired by Representative Donna Christian-Christensen from the Virgin Islands. Dr. Christensen is the only physician member of the Congressional Black Caucus. "The gaps for those who are underserved and thus, dying or becoming disabled, is now excessive," says Representative Christensen. "The numbers continue to grow, and that is not acceptable."

Representative James E. Clyburn from South Carolina, is hosting the CBC Institute conference and chairs the CBC Environmental Justice Braintrust. "The environmental factors that exist in greater concentration around low-income, minority communities, especially in the South, remain a source of concern without simple answers," explains Representative Clyburn. "How these environmental factors impact our health and what can be done minimize those impacts warrants the development of comprehensive policy that address both concerns."

In addition to the activities of both CBC Braintrusts, members of the National Environmental Policy Commission (NEPC) will assist in conducting the public participation segment of the Listening Session. The NEPC is an outgrowth of recommendations from the Environmental Justice Braintrust under the leadership of Congressman Clyburn. The Commission is composed of representatives from business and industry, health organizations, academia, environmental justice communities, labor representatives and tribal, state and local governments.

The Listening Session will be held on the campus of the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC, on June 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and on June 8, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon in the Basic Science Building Auditorium at 173 Ashley Avenue. Those wishing to address this Joint Listening Session will have the opportunity to submit a prepared written statement that includes issue identification and recommendations to the Braintrusts. Participants will have three minutes to present a summary of their statements.

Coordinating partners for this initiative include the Medical University of South Carolina Environmental Biosciences Program, South Carolina State University Transportation Center, and the University of South Carolina School of Public Health.

Please contact Andrea Martin at (202)785-3634 to obtain additional information, including the list of speakers.