



January 9, 2021

In June of 2020, we witnessed violent abuses of power all over the nation in response to #BlackLivesMatter protests against police violence and systemic racism. We saw armored tanks, riot gear, and “less lethal” weapons used en masse in our state. The #BlackLivesMatter protests in Washington, DC following the killing of George Floyd were peaceful, but law enforcement responded with violence. Tear gas and rubber bullets were used, and 427 arrests were made.

This past week, the entire nation and world watched as a violent insurrection stormed the United States Capitol building. The primarily white insurrectionists stormed our nation’s Capitol, killing a police officer and putting the lives of the entire congress at risk, including the presidential lines of succession. An additional 4 insurrectionists died. Thus far, the insurrection has resulted in 52 arrests. Every person who stormed the Capitol committed a crime, yet most were allowed to leave the building without consequence. We watched in sadness and dismay as our nation proved to the world, on live television, that white privilege protects white bodies.

As current and future health professionals, we are deeply saddened by the continued societal inequality facing populations of color. When healthcare professionals speak of racism as a public health crisis, this difference in policing is one example. The plan and intentions of multiple groups of white citizens to storm the Capitol building were clearly on display on social media, and yet the militarized police were not prepared and did not respond appropriately. In contrast, Black Lives Matter protests were greeted with a show of force, including National Guard deployment. This jarring discrepancy in the treatment of white and Black bodies by law enforcement is the tip of the spear of the carceral system in the United States: a tip that wounds one group while protecting another, results in the U.S. being a global leader in the number of citizens in prison, and creates direct risks in health and safety for communities of color every day.



MDHEQ strongly condemns the terrorist actions at the Capitol. We condemn the inaction of local and federal government officials in preparation and response to this event. During our continued public health crises of COVID-19 and systemic racism, a just, stable, and fair government is essential towards the progress of public health for all individuals.

In response to these recent events, we strongly urge the public and fellow members of the healthcare community to speak up regarding acts of domestic terrorism at the local, state or national level. We encourage our members to contact their representatives to demand justice be served to those who behaved unlawfully on January 6th. We urge members to call out the media when inappropriately labeling insurrectionists and white supremacists as protesters.

Finally, we urge the members of MDHEQ and our community to continue to learn and reflect on the impact of police violence and systemic racism.