



Rev. Dr. Michael C. Murphy

Rev. Dr. Michael C. Murphy, former Michigan State Representative and original author of Michigan Public Act 653 (the Minority Health Law) passed away at 62 years old on December 28, 2014. He served as the Senior Minister of St. Stephen's United Church of Christ in Lansing, Michigan for twenty-one years.

Social justice and human rights issues were Rev. Murphy's passions. He answered the call for public service in 1997, which began with his election to the Lansing City Council. In 2000, Rev. Murphy was elected to the House of Representatives to serve in a district that covered most of Lansing making him the first African-American to win the district and served in the Michigan House of Representatives for three terms, from 2001-2006 where he was known for his work on safety issues for children. During his tenure, he served on the Appropriations Committee, (Vice Chair); Transportation and as the Chairperson of the Black Caucus. In 2006, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators awarded him the President's Award for his leadership in responding to the need in the Gulf Coast states after Hurricane Katrina.

Recognitions for service and leadership include an honorary doctorate from UCC-affiliated Olivet College, the CTS Alumni/ae Award in Ministry, and the "Champion of Hope" award for his advocacy for children services. He was a life-member of the N.A.A.C.P. and a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Rep. Murphy introduced legislation to improve the health of minorities in Michigan. He sponsored a bill (P.A. 653 of 2006) that required the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) to take specific actions to address disparities in health affecting ethnic and minority residents. According to the Capital News Service 2002, "When Rep. Michael Murphy introduced legislation to improve the health of minorities in Michigan he didn't know his call to action would translate into startling results in at least two national research studies".

Representative Murphy, D-Lansing, said his House bill was aimed at calling the Michigan health care community to task for years of delivering substandard health care to the state's minority populations. Murphy said "the time to not only recognize that serious disparities exist but to take action is long overdue". "The bill basically addresses the fact that there are major disparities in the quality of health care for minorities especially among our black and Hispanic communities in Michigan and that it has been a continuing problem for far too long." "The intention of the bill is to draw attention to the issue and to close the gap for a healthier population." The legislation added a new section to the Public Health Code, requiring the Department of Community Health to take aggressive action in upgrading health care for minorities statewide. A key component of the measure would be the development of an awareness program designed to educate health and social service providers about the special health care needs of minorities.

The bill was introduced to amend the public health code 1978 PA 368 to develop and implement a structure to address racial and ethnic health disparities in the state of Michigan. Since that time MDCH has worked to address the requirements of House Bill No. 4455 - PA 653. MDCH has made progress in addressing the bill through priority recommendations of the Michigan Health Equity Roadmap. Since 2007, MDCH have released the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) Health Equity Report. House Bill 4455, commonly referred to as Public Act 653, enacted in 2007. Public Act 653 mandates that MDCH 'create a structure to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities' and report to the Michigan Legislature annually on the Department's progress. The Health Equity Report serves as the required annual report. The highlight of the report is to display the yearly accomplishments across MDCH to achieve health equity and it is our goal to continue to provide leadership in achieving racial and ethnic health equity in Michigan.

We thank and salute Rev. Dr. Michael Murphy for giving us the Minority Health Law to achieve health equity in Michigan.

Mr. Murphy recalled in his farewell remarks to the House in 2006. *"People have asked me over the years, 'You're a pastor and a preacher, how could you go into public life, how can you be a politician?' as if that's some type of greasy slide from being pastor to being in public life," "And I always tell them, I say, 'It's about service; it's about doing the work of the people,' because the people hold great hope for those of us who come here."*