



- Week of July 24, 2023

Greetings to all those who call the 9th Senatorial District home. I thought I'd break away from the "excessive heat warning" headlines and flat performance by the Royals to talk about mental health, and in particular, minority mental health. July was designated Minority Mental Health Awareness Month in 2008 to reduce disparities, help people gain a better understanding and put an end to the stigma that perpetuates this disease and keeps people from seeking help.

The City of Kansas City, Missouri Health Commission launched the [2022-2027 Kansas City Community Health Improvement Plan](#) (CHIP) in January last year. The plan addresses racism-related disparities in health outcomes and life expectancy and removes barriers to access in minority communities. To give you some perspective, the life expectancy for those who live in ZIP codes 64128 and 64129 are 68.1 and 69.4 respectively, compared to 86.3 for those who have 64113 in their address. The CHIP outlines 18 goals to deal with the systemic causes of these disparities, including public health, safe and affordable housing, education, health care and violence prevention, placing the responsibility on institutions, not individuals.

Since it is often difficult to determine when behaviors move from normal to problematic, it's important to know some of the common signs and symptoms of mental health conditions that may require professional help and intervention. If you or someone you love is drinking heavily or misusing drugs, exhibiting extreme mood swings or violent behavior, experiencing prolonged anxiety or depression or having thoughts of suicide, please dial or text 988 to connect with someone who can help. The Greater Kansas City Mental Health Coalition also has a variety of resources and local services listed on its website.

Folks, mental illness affects every family and every community, in fact, one in four adults and 10% of children in the United States have struggled in their lifetime. One of the easiest and most effective ways to combat behavioral health issues is to have frequent and open dialogues. Isolation and shame are deterrents to mental wellness, but conversations increase understanding and acceptance.

This is one of the reasons I am so passionate about hosting the annual minority mental health awareness event in our community. It will take all of us working together to move the needle and improve tolerance and access to mental health care. Please share this flyer on your social media outlets and plan on joining in the discussion at "Brunch with Bebe's Sisters" this Saturday, July 29.




SENATOR BARBARA ANNE WASHINGTON, ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC.,<sup>®</sup> MU OMEGA CHAPTER  
 & BETA OMEGA CHAPTER, AND METROPOLITAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE PRESENT

**10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS EVENT**

**"Brunch With Bebe's Sisters"**

**SATURDAY, JULY 29, 2023, 9:30 A.M.**  
**MCC-PENN VALLEY EDUCATION CENTER**  
 3201 SW TRAFFICWAY, KANSAS CITY, MO 64111

FEATURING A PANEL DISCUSSION:  
**MATERNAL HEALTH**  
 WITH DOULAS, MIDWIVES & HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:






I am also excited about the \$300 million in funding allocated in the Fiscal Year '24 budget to construct a new psychiatric hospital in our Kansas City community. This new hospital will replace the aging Center for Behavioral Health and help alleviate the shortage of mental health beds, while offering critical emergency and outpatient services.

I hope to see you tomorrow as we work to build a healthier, mentally-well community!

*It is an honor representing the great people of Kansas City's 9th Senatorial District. If you need assistance navigating state government or understanding the legislative process, please contact me by calling 573-751-3158 or emailing [Barbara.Washington@senate.mo.gov](mailto:Barbara.Washington@senate.mo.gov). My team is here for you!*