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AMA Announces First Chief Health Equity Officer

May 14, 2019 – The American Medical Association (AMA) today announced the hiring of Aletha Maybank, M.D., M.P.H., as its first ever chief health equity officer. Dr. Maybank joins the AMA after serving as deputy commissioner and founding director of the Center for Health Equity within New York City's public health department.

In her new role at the AMA, Dr. Maybank will launch the AMA's Center for Health Equity which will work to embed health equity across the organization so that health equity becomes part of the practice, process, action, innovation, and organizational performance and outcomes. She will also be tasked with building organizational capacity to elevate the

importance of and to sustain the AMA's health equity efforts.

"The AMA is uniquely positioned to positively shape health care in our country and improve the lives of all Americans. With the hiring of Dr. Maybank and the beginning of her work, we aspire to advance our mission by reducing disparities and increasing health equity to improve health of all populations," said James L. Madara, M.D., AMA chief executive officer and executive vice president. "Dr. Maybank has deep expertise and experience in health equity and working with communities of color that have experienced historical disinvestment. We are excited by her vision, her vigor, and the opportunity to address the myriad reasons for health disparities and health inequity, including juvenile justice, bias, stereotyping, prejudice and clinical uncertainty, and the fact that chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension disproportionately affect underserved populations."

"It is with great honor and privilege to be afforded this opportunity to embed health equity at the AMA, a leading force in healthcare. The pursuit of health equity is a pathway towards excellence in our healthcare system – one that ensures the valuing of human experience and rights," said Dr. Maybank. "For this reason, I am grateful for the leadership and commitment of the AMA Board of Trustees to prioritize health equity as a critical way forward for the AMA. Threading health equity into the fabric of the AMA requires urgency, patience, and perseverance. Although the AMA and physicians cannot control all conditions that need to change to achieve health equity, the AMA has a role to identify their importance and to urge those who can have a direct role to act. This work starts by looking inward to unearth how our own institutional practices and policies may have exacerbated inequities and to determine what we will need to do to strengthen or change to advance equity. This path recognizes that we must do more as institutions to protect people."

At the 2018 Annual Meeting, the AMA House of Delegates passed sweeping new policy to define health equity and outline a strategic framework toward realizing the goal of achieving optimal health for all. The path forward included establishing

a structural home for the effort, complete with dedicated resources, staff and budget, and a multi-year programmatic roadmap. Dr. Maybank will lead that effort.

As deputy commissioner and founding director of the Center for Health Equity in New York City, Dr. Maybank made great strides to advance health equity evolving the culture and public health practice of the Health Department by building the capacity of staff to better understand how their work either advances or exacerbates health equity. She oversaw the rebranding of local district public health offices to the Neighborhood Health Action Centers, renewing the agency's commitment to neighborhood-based work and enhanced coordination of these efforts. Dr. Maybank oversaw one of the first place-based community health worker efforts in NYC Public Housing. She has pushed relentlessly to change the tenured narratives around what creates health and brought Health Department's its first Artist-in-Residence to amplify their maternal health and birth equity efforts.

Prior to being deputy commissioner, Dr. Maybank was an assistant commissioner at the NYC Health Department 2009 -2014. Her Bureau set a precedent and created a template for community-driven planning and implementation to improve the built environment by creating safety improvements and bike lanes to encourage active transportation, as one example.

Dr. Maybank also successfully launched the Office of Minority Health as its Founding Director in the Suffolk County Department of Health Services in NY from 2006-2009.

Dr. Maybank holds a B.A. from Johns Hopkins University, an M.D. from Temple University School of Medicine, and an M.P.H. from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. She is pediatrician board certified in Preventive Medicine/Public Health.

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