Maryland Department of Health Student Research Project

**Evidence to Action: Using Data to Strengthen
Departmental Operations and Facilitate Constituent Engagement**

Focus Areas:
Data Analysis, Process Improvement, Public Health Policy,
Systems Thinking, Legislative Readiness

SUMMER 2026
May 26 – July 31

This project is being offered through the **University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: MPowering the State** (http://mpower.maryland.edu) – a formal collaboration between the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) and the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). The University of Maryland Strategic Partnership – "MPower" – provides funding for the program.

MDH MISSION
The mission of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is to work together to promote and improve the health and safety of all Marylanders through disease prevention, access to care, quality management, and community engagement.

The Office of Governmental Affairs (OGA) supports this mission through legislative and regulatory processes. OGA seeks to develop and enact the legislative agenda of MDH through (1) research and analysis of ongoing health trends and data, (2) cultivate internal and external relationships, and (3) liaise between the state legislature and MDH leadership.

PROJECT OVERVIEW
The OGA plays a critical role in ensuring that policy decisions are informed by data, evidence, and the lived experiences of Marylanders. Working closely with the Maryland General Assembly and departmental leadership, OGA manages constituent concerns, analyzes proposed legislation, and supports health policy that promotes the well-being of all Maryland residents.

This project provides the selected student — particularly those in medical, public health, or STEM fields — with a hands-on opportunity to understand how data informs decision-

making. The UM Scholar will explore how constituent inquiries highlight health system challenges, identify trends through data analysis, and recommend process improvements that strengthen government responsiveness and efficiency.

ABOUT THE PROJECT
The UM Scholar will be embedded within OGA and serve as a key link between data, process, and policy. The selected student will help manage and analyze constituent inquiries to uncover trends, inefficiencies, and opportunities for system improvement — ultimately presenting findings that can guide leadership decisions.

Proposed Activities
- **Facilitate the movement of constituent inquiries:** Receive, log, and track inquiries using OGA's internal systems; route them to the appropriate unit and ensure timely responses.
- **Use data to drive insight:** Compile and analyze constituent inquiry data to identify frequently cited health concerns or recurring issues.
- **Communicate findings:** Develop a visual dashboard or poster summarizing key data trends, such as the most common inquiry types or bottlenecks in the process.
- **Process improvement analysis:** Map the inquiry workflow, identify where delays occur, and recommend strategies to improve turnaround time and reduce strain on program units.
- **Engage stakeholders:** Conduct short interviews or surveys with departmental staff to understand workflow challenges and identify best practices.
- **Present findings to leadership:** Prepare a final poster or presentation summarizing data trends, process analysis, and recommended improvements.

Skill Development and Training
- **Data analysis and visualization** for policy insight and operational improvement.
- **Process mapping and systems thinking**, applying analytical frameworks to real-world government functions.
- **Professional communication**, including report writing, presentation design, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Policy translation**, understanding how data informs decisions that shape departmental policy.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the 10-week experience, the UM Scholar will:
- Understand how constituent data informs public health decision-making and policy priorities.
- Develop proficiency in analyzing and visualizing real-world operational data.
- Gain insight into how state agencies translate community concerns into policy or programmatic responses.

- Strengthen communication and presentation skills through the creation of a professional data-driven poster.

Overall Goals

The goal of this project is to equip the UM Scholar with a practical understanding of how data, policy, and health administration intersect. Through direct participation in OGA's constituent management process, the intern will help MDH better understand public needs and improve internal responsiveness—advancing the Department's mission to promote health and safety for all Marylanders.

IDEAL CANDIDATE

This project is ideal for a detail-oriented, analytical thinker with an interest in applying data-driven approaches to public health and government operations. Students from medical, public health, or STEM disciplines who are curious about health administration and how data informs policy are encouraged to apply.

Preferred candidates will demonstrate:
- Strong analytical and research skills, with comfort working with data and identifying patterns.
- Interest in health systems, operations, or policy analysis.
- Excellent communication and data presentation skills.
- Professionalism, initiative, and curiosity in a collaborative environment.
- Proficiency with data tools (Google Sheets, Excel, or visualization platforms such as Tableau); experience with surveys or stakeholder interviews is a plus.

ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

Students may come from UMCP's College of Behavioral & Social Sciences, College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences, A. James Clark School of Engineering, Robert H. School of Business, Graduate School, School of Public Policy, or School of Public Health and UMB's School of Medicine, School of Graduate Studies, School of Dentistry, School of Nursing, School of Social Work, Francis King Carey School of Law, or School of Pharmacy.

PROJECT LOCATION

This project will be delivered in a hybrid format. When in person, this is the address that the student will report to:

MDH State Center
201 W. Preston Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Mentor and student should discuss delivery details during the interview, including method (in-person, hybrid, or remote), expectations, location, and meeting frequency. Flexibilities to complete the 10 weeks of research may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

PROJECT LEAD/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Olivia Hardy, Health Policy Analyst

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PROJECT REQUIREMENTS:

- 10 weeks/400-hour student research project conducted with schedule mutually defined and agreed upon by the student and mentor.
- The project is funded by the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: *MPowering the State* (MPower) and is a part of the UM Scholars program.
- The selected student will receive a stipend for their work, to be paid in multiple installments over the 10 weeks.
  - **$5,500** for undergraduate students
  - **$6,500** for graduate students
- Work is expected to occur during typical business hours; Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.
- To be eligible, the student must be enrolled in the Fall 2026 semester.
- Travel to and parking at MDH is the responsibility of the student and costs are included in the stipend.

APPLY HERE
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Application will be linked above when it opens.