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## **Arkansas Pharmacists Association Names Pharmacist to New Staff Position** *Role Will Concentrate on COVID-19 Health Disparities*

**Little Rock, AR** – Arkansas Pharmacists Association (APA) Executive Vice President and CEO John Vinson, PharmD has selected Marlene Battle, Pharm.D., to join the APA staff in the newly created role of Health Equity Coordinator.

Dr. Battle's role was created in an effort to provide a meaningful impact in health disparities and social determinants of health across Arkansas that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As Health Equity Coordinator, she will help direct programs to benefit Arkansas's most underserved and vulnerable populations and will work in tandem with the Arkansas Department of Health Equity to further the state's goals and objectives. Duties of the position will include coordinating vaccine access to underserved patients, assisting pharmacies to expand COVID-19 local testing programs, working with drug manufacturers and pharmacies to increase patient enrollments in payment assistance programs, expanding the number of pharmacies participating in the Vaccines for Children program, assisting in the launch of pharmacists provided contraception to expand reproductive choices for the medically underserved, and more.

"I am excited to join the Arkansas Pharmacists Association team and take on a role that will have a direct impact on Arkansas patients and pharmacists and ensure that we as a state move toward a place where all patients are given equitable access to excellent and affordable healthcare," Battle said.

Dr. Battle earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway and a Master of Science in Biology from Texas A&M University-Commerce. She attended the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Pharmacy where she earned a Doctor of Pharmacy. During her career as a pharmacist, Dr. Battle has gained experience in hospital, specialty, and retail pharmacy, including leadership positions with Walgreens and Fred's Pharmacies. Before joining APA, Dr. Battle was the Pharmacy Manager for D&D Pharmacy, LLC located within the Arkansas Diagnostic Center and has been on the forefront of administering COVID-19 vaccines within the community as well as educating the public about the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Dr. Battle remains active in the community and with professional organizations, serving as the Pharmacy Representative for the Arkansas Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association and a member of the Arkansas Pharmacists Association and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. In 2019, Governor Asa Hutchinson appointed her to serve a seven-year term on the Board of Visitors for the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts, of which she is an alum.

"Marlene's skills, talents, and enthusiasm for improving Arkansas communities make her a natural choice for the position of Health Equity Coordinator," APA CEO John Vinson said. "Her drive to make a difference will help Arkansas's underserved patients to experience a better quality of life and give them better control over their own health and healthcare decisions."

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*The Arkansas Pharmacists Association, founded in 1882, is the statewide professional association representing approximately 2,200 pharmacists in Arkansas. APA strives to further the professional advancement of pharmacists, advocate the value of pharmacy, and safeguard the health and well-being of every Arkansan. Its mission is to advance a professional and business environment for Arkansas pharmacists to be successful and fulfilled in serving patients.*