

April 3, 2020

Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Vice Admiral Jerome M. Adams, M.D.
United States Surgeon General
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Redfield and Dr. Adams:

We are writing to request that you take swift action to begin tracking and reporting on novel coronavirus testing, COVID-19 cases, and COVID-19 health outcomes using data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, primary language, genders, disability status, and socioeconomic status. Additionally there are other critical data needs, such as capturing variations in testing and care in rural areas as compared to more densely populated areas. That is why we are requesting a virtual meeting with you to discuss the most effective strategies for tracking and reporting on a full range of vital information.

As you know, communities of color and tribal communities, among other populations, face well-documented disparities in both access to health care as well as health outcomes. As this pandemic pushes our health care system to the breaking point we cannot allow the current crisis to obviate the need for tracking and reporting on how the novel coronavirus is affecting people by race, ethnicity, primary language, genders, disability status, and socioeconomic status. Focusing on these populations with the goal of achieving better health outcomes will also have the spillover effect of helping everyone as we work together to address these unprecedented challenges. In addition, while the novel coronavirus does not discriminate based on race or socioeconomic status, disaggregating this data will help policymakers and outside partners better understand the impacts on different segments of the population based on existing disparities and craft more calibrated responses.

While some local officials have appropriately expressed a valid concern related to protecting the privacy of affected individuals and communities, who might become the target of racially-motivated stereotyping or other forms of harassment, we believe there are numerous ways to strike the right balance between those concerns and the need to add more transparency and information to our understanding about how the novel coronavirus and COVID-19 is affecting communities of color. Racial and ethnic health disparities and inequities can only be eliminated if there is high-quality information by which to track immediate problems and underlying social determinants, as well as to guide the design and application of culturally specific medical and public health approaches. The most useful data on health outcomes is disaggregated by genders as well as broad racial categories such as Black, Latino, Asian, White

or Native American. Ideally, such data is further disaggregated within broad racial groups such as the Asian population, to understand divergent experiences by ancestry. However, that is not yet happening, at least publicly, as policymakers and health officials scramble to respond to the current crisis.

As leaders committed to promoting just and fair inclusion for everyone in society, including access to health care and equitable health outcomes, we call on you to take immediate steps to correct the current reporting deficiencies. It is the only way to ensure the response to the COVID-19 pandemic is sufficiently executed on the local, state, and federal levels.

We look forward to having a conversation with you and your teams to resolve this urgent matter; and we stand ready with our public health partners as we continue to promote the latest information and guidance to communities of color, tribal communities and other vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,

Michael McAfee
President and CEO
PolicyLink

Fatima Goss Graves
President and CEO
National Women's Law
Center

Hardie Davis, Jr.
Mayor of Augusta, GA
President, African American
Mayors Association

Derrick Johnson
President and CEO
NAACP

Orson Aguilar
Executive Director
UnidosUS Action Fund

Joia Crear Perry, MD
President
National Birth Equity
Collaborative

CC: The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
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