



Urban League
Twin Cities

*"We believe an equitable society
can be realized."*

April 21, 2020

Hon. Governor Tim Walz
State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul MN 55155

Transmission via email: tim.walz@state.mn.us gov.contact@state.mn.us

Dear Governor Walz:

The United States has the highest number of reported cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in the world, and our state, as of today, has 2,470 confirmed cases of infection and 143 deaths. The greatest density of infection is located in the metro areas of Hennepin (975), Ramsey (202), Washington (97) and Anoka (95) counties, areas with opportunity zone designations by your administration based on poverty guidelines.

As you are aware, mounting evidence indicates African Americans are disproportionately impacted by the spread of COVID-19. Some cities and states are reporting that black people are contracting the virus at a rate twice that of their percentage in the overall population. Compounding that alarming trend, the morbidity rates for African Americans is nearly three times their percentage in the population. Black people across the nation and here in Minnesota historically have less access to healthcare and tend to work in lower wage, "high touch, close quarters" jobs in the food service, retail, construction, transportation and personal care sectors that cannot be performed from home—all of which makes them more susceptible to contracting COVID-19. Moreover, longstanding health disparities among African Americans, the result of decades of disinvestment and apathy among policy makers and health care professionals, have resulted in high incidences of risk and morbidity factors like immunodeficiency disorders, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory disease.

Despite these high-risk factors among African Americans and people of color, there is alarmingly little publicly-available information about the race of persons tested for COVID-19 exposure and case fatalities. The CDC has been tracking age and gender data and underlying health factors in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report in order to understand the relationship of these particular factors to severe outcomes in COVID-19 patients. As of this writing, however, the CDC has not released any racial data about persons under investigation for COVID-19 infection, despite the fact that these data are supposed to be collected in CDC's "Human Infection with 2019 Novel Coronavirus Person Under

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Investigation (PUI) and Case Report Form" (available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/pui-form.pdf>).

In Minnesota, the Department of Health publishes a daily Situation Update of COVID-19 impacts that includes a single table on race and ethnicity. Unfortunately, that table only aggregates the numbers of cases statewide by race, but does not provide disaggregated race data by county, city, neighborhood, zip code or census tract, which is needed.

To limit the duration and severity of this pandemic, our state needs a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the problem to determine where to target direct testing, treatment, and mitigation efforts. Accordingly, we request public release of de-identified/aggregate demographic data, including race, on who has received COVID-19 diagnostic testing, who has tested positive, and the clinical disposition of those who tested positive, including recovery and death. **It would be most helpful to release these data at the census-tract level.** Several jurisdictions already have released racial data, including the District of Columbia, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, North Carolina, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

A better understanding of who needs to be tested, the rates of infection, mortality, and recovery are necessary to "flatten the curve." Our failure to examine and study racial data could exacerbate the higher infection and death rate for African Americans and persons of color. We must act now to save lives. We look forward to the public release of these data without delay.

Sincerely,

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cc: Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, peggy.flanagan@state.mn.us
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