



Equitable Data Collection and Disclosure on COVID-19 Act of 2020

Background

The United States is in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic. The novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”) is devastating communities across the nation and beyond at a record pace.¹ Despite early reporting that showed the virus’ deadly impact on the elderly, preliminary racial and ethnicity data on COVID-19 outcomes have revealed a troubling and tragic situation in which communities of color have been disproportionately affected by serious illness and outcomes as a result of this public health emergency.²

Due to pre-existing health disparities, socioeconomic inequality, and structural racism, communities of color are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. People of color, specifically Black, Latinx, and Native communities, are more likely to have higher rates of certain underlying health condition such as heart disease, diabetes and asthma that put them at increased risk for complications due to COVID-19.³ People of color and immigrant populations are less likely to be insured, and many communities of color face shortages of health care providers, which make it difficult to access appropriate and timely care.⁴ Moreover, people of color are also more likely to work in low-wage jobs that cannot be done remotely and have fewer financial resources to draw on in the event of health problems or economic disruption, making it more difficult to partake in physical distancing guidelines and avoid exposure.^{5,6}

Early reporting on racial disparities in COVID-19 testing and treatment suggest that Black communities have been among the hardest hit. Last week, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts began to release racial data, revealing Black and Latinx communities had higher rates of COVID-19 infections.⁷ The same has borne true in areas like Michigan, Louisiana, Wisconsin.^{8,9} In Chicago, Illinois preliminary data on mortalities has shown Black people make up 30% of the population but account for 70% of COVID-19 deaths.¹⁰ These preliminary state and local reports have renewed calls for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other relevant sub-agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to collect and publicly release racial and demographic data to better inform the pandemic response, specifically in communities of color.

¹ Akilah Johnson, Talia Buford. “Early Data Shows African Americans Have Contracted and Died of Coronavirus at an Alarming Rate.” Propublica, April 3, 2020. <https://www.propublica.org/article/early-data-shows-african-americans-have-contracted-and-died-of-coronavirus-at-an-alarming-rate>

² *Ibid.*

³ Samantha Artiga, Rachel Garfield, Kendal Orgera. “Communities of Color at Higher Risk for Health and Economic Challenges due to COVID-19.” Kaiser Family Foundation, April 7, 2020. <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/communities-of-color-at-higher-risk-for-health-and-economic-challenges-due-to-covid-19/>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Drew DeSilver. “Before the coronavirus, telework was an optional benefit mostly for the affluent few.” Pew Research Center, March 20, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/20/before-the-coronavirus-telework-was-an-optional-benefit-mostly-for-the-affluent-few/>

⁶ Rakesh Kochhar, Anthony Cilluffo. “Key findings on the rise in income inequality within America’s racial and ethnic groups.” Pew Research Center, July 12, 2018. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/07/12/key-findings-on-the-rise-in-income-inequality-within-americas-racial-and-ethnic-groups/>

⁷ Editorial Board. “More COVID-19 data from the state would save lives.” The Boston Globe, April 11, 2020. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/04/11/opinion/more-covid-19-data-state-would-save-lives/>

⁸ Fabioloa Cineas. “Covid-19 is disproportionately taking black lives.” Vox, April 8, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2020/4/7/21211849/coronavirus-black-americans>

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Dan Vergano, Kadia Gobia. Why The Coronavirus Is Killing Black Americans At Outsize Rates Across The US. BuzzFeed, April 10, 2020. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/danvergano/coronavirus-black-americans-covid19>



The Equitable Data Collection and Disclosure on COVID-19 Act

The Equitable Data Collection and Disclosure on COVID-19 Act of 2020 would:

1. Require HHS to use all available surveillance systems to post daily updates on the CDC website showing the following data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, sex, age, tribal affiliation, socioeconomic status, disability status, and county:
 - Data related to COVID-19 testing, including the number of individuals tested and the number of tests that were positive.
 - Data related to treatment for COVID-19, including hospitalizations and intensive care unit admissions and duration;
 - Data related to COVID-19 outcomes, including fatalities.
1. Require HHS to take all necessary steps to protect privacy and Tribal sovereignty in releasing this data.
2. Require HHS to provide a summary of the final statistics and a report to Congress within 60 days after the end of the public health emergency.
3. Authorize \$50 million in emergency supplemental funding to HHS and state and local public health departments to conduct or support data collection on the racial and ethnic implications of COVID-19.
4. Create a Commission on Ensuring Health Equity During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, including federal, state, local, and tribal officials along with independent experts, to provide guidance on how to better collect, develop and analyze racial, tribal, and demographic data in responding to future waves of the coronavirus.

Endorsements: National Urban League, Lawyer's Committee on Civil Rights, National Action Network