

HEALTH
EQUITY
SOLUTIONS

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April 2, 2020

Governor Ned Lamont
Office of the Governor
State of Connecticut
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Via email

Commissioner Renée Coleman-Mitchell
Department of Public Health
410 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06134
Via email

Dear Governor Lamont and Commissioner Coleman-Mitchell,

First, we want to thank you for the many steps the state has taken to advance public health and expand access to basic needs in the time of this pandemic. Today, we ask that the state's pandemic response be intentionally inclusive of people of color. By collecting and reporting race and ethnicity data, the state can recognize and work to address disproportionate distribution of resources, including health care.

Health inequities are rooted in structural inequality that has privileged some individuals and communities and disenfranchised others. Because of structural racism and its resultant outcomes, people of color in Connecticut are more likely to live in densely populated neighborhoods, work wage-based jobs, have less wealth, and suffer from chronic health conditions such as asthma and diabetes. For these reasons, we are concerned that people of color will be disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Race and ethnicity data for COVID-19 tests, cases, and related deaths must be uniformly collected and publicly reported. Without this data, we cannot assess the disparities in access to health care that historical evidence strongly suggests are already embedded in the pandemic response. Further, this data is necessary to adjust response policies to address unintended inequities and ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to the health services they need. Most, if not all, of this data is already being collected. No race or ethnicity data on COVID-19 has been published. ***If collection and reporting of race and ethnicity data is not begun immediately, we risk dramatically widening the already enormous disparities faced by Connecticut's people of color.***

In the near future, ***it is crucial that we examine disparities in the distribution of resources related to health and basic needs during both the pandemic and the subsequent recovery period.*** For example, race and ethnicity data should be released for enrollment in Medicaid, qualified health plans, SNAP, and unemployment, participation in loan programs for small

businesses and nonprofits, and other public services. The current crisis shines a spotlight on the state's lack of public data to assess and address health equity.

If Connecticut collects and reports race and ethnicity data, we will have the opportunity to prevent increased inequity. Thank you for considering this urgent request.

Sincerely,



Tekisha Everette, PhD
Executive Director

cc:

Paul Mounds

Vicki Veltri

Deidre Gifford

David Lehman

Kate McEvoy

Jennifer Jackson