

HEALTH EQUITY SOLUTIONS

175 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06106
860.461.7637

June 5, 2020

CT Department of
Public Health
410 Capitol Ave.
Hartford CT 06134
Via email

Dear Acting Commissioner Gifford,

Thank you for the effort the Connecticut Department of Public Health has taken to mitigate the impact of the current pandemic. We write today to ask that the Department work to improve the collection and reporting of race and ethnicity data.

On June 4, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced new guidance requiring that demographic information, including race and ethnicity, be submitted when reporting COVID-19 test results. While Connecticut, like many other states, has begun to publish limited race and ethnicity data for positive COVID-19 cases, these data sets include a high proportion of cases coded “unknown” for these demographic categories. [Regional data](#) suggest wide variation in how consistently the state’s health systems collect race and ethnicity data.

Race and ethnicity data are necessary **now** to ensure that resources are targeted to the hardest hit communities—in other words, that we are defining “high risk” through data analysis. In the short term, this information should instigate data-driven decisions about the distribution of testing and contact tracing efforts. As the pandemic continues for months, possibly years, this data will be key in mitigating its toll. Finally, clear guidance on data collection now could lead to system-wide improvements in the collection of race and ethnicity data, ultimately improving the ability of the state to leverage the Health Information Exchange to drive progress towards health equity.

We urge the Department of Public Health to issue clear guidance on the standard collection of race and ethnicity data by hospitals, clinics, and other health service providers conducting COVID-19 testing.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this issue. Again, we are grateful for all you and your staff have done to address this pandemic.

Sincerely,



Tekisha Everette, PhD
Executive Director

cc:

Paul Mounds
Josh Geballe
Vicki Veltri
Steven Hernández
Orlando Velazco