

May 11, 2020

Secretary Alex Azar  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to you concerning the recent grant opportunity announced by the United States Department of Health and Human Services - Office of Minority Health (OMH) entitled “National Infrastructure for Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 within Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities” MP-CPI-20-006.

While we applaud the Department’s efforts, we are disappointed that it will only award **one** grant to establish a national infrastructure for mitigating the impact of COVID-19 within communities of color and rural communities.

As you are well aware, the novel coronavirus is having a devastating impact on older Americans and racial and ethnic minorities. In fact, data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest that COVID19 is having disproportionate effects on these communities, with African Americans accounting for 34% of confirmed cases with known race/ethnicity compared to 13% of the total population as of April 20, 2020. However, race and ethnicity is missing or unspecified for nearly two-thirds (65%) of the [CDC-reported cases](#), limiting our understanding of the true impacts by race and ethnicity. Further, in states like New York, the novel coronavirus is killing Latinos [at twice the rate](#) that it is killing white people. In California, COVID-19 is killing black and Latinos at higher rates than whites in New York City and beyond. The brunt of the disease is still not known among low income, limited-English-speaking populations who may not have access to timely, accurate information. Furthermore, the CDC states that some people with disabilities may have a higher risk of infection or severe illness because of an underlying medical condition.

In order to have the best chance of mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on racial and ethnic minority, rural, disability, and disadvantaged communities hardest hit by the current pandemic, and people with disabilities, we recommend HHS take the following steps:

**Expand Funding Opportunities to Address Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Communities**

- Fund multiple approaches and organizations to address the problem. It is unlikely that a single organization is in a position to develop an effective strategy to mitigate the impact of COVID 19 across multiple subgroups, including tribal and rural communities, as proposed by this grant. Providing a single grant to one entity will not have the impact that we urgently need now to save lives of people of color, those with higher risks due to underlying medical conditions and/or disabilities, and those who live in rural and tribal communities who have been devastated by COVID-19 pandemic.

- Introduce funding opportunities for distinct communities along with guidelines that allow for the study of (and intervention on) direct and indirect health impacts of COVID-19.
- Establish transparent criteria for how applications will be evaluated and scored for any COVID-19 funding opportunities through the Office of Minority Health.
- Clarify areas of priority, whether these are specific populations or mechanisms driving disparities.

**Disaggregate and Report COVID-19 Data by Race, Ethnicity, Language, Gender, Disability, and Socioeconomic Status**

- We encourage HHS to collect comprehensive, demographic data on race, ethnicity, gender, language, disability, and socioeconomic status of patients being tested for COVID-19, the rate of positive test results, and outcomes for those with COVID-19. This data will be invaluable to ensuring that our nation’s health response to the current crisis is equitable and reaching all communities.

We stand ready to support you and would be happy to serve as a resource should you have any questions or require additional information. Thank you again for your work to address the COVID-19 public health crisis and for your efforts to prioritize equity in the work of HHS.

Sincerely,

Jason Resendez  
Chief of Staff  
UsAgainstAlzheimer’s

Earl Hadley  
Assistant Director  
American Federation of  
Teachers

Earl Fowlkes  
President/CEO  
Center for Black Equity

Kevin Kimble  
Member  
Health Equity  
Collaborative

Mark Edberg  
Center Director  
The Avance Center

Barbara Kornblau  
Executive Director  
Coalition for Disability  
Health Equity

Brandon Macsata  
CEO  
ADAP Advocacy  
Association

Michelle A. Albert, MD  
President  
Association of Black  
Cardiologists

Anthony Feliciano  
Director  
Commission on the  
Public’s Health System

Kim Nichols  
Co-Executive Director  
African Services  
Committee

Tammy Boyd  
Chief Policy Officer  
Black Women’s Health  
Imperative

Bill Arnold  
President and CEO  
Community Access  
National Network

Rosa Mendoza  
President and CEO  
ALLvanza

Connie Stewart  
Executive Director  
California Center for Rural  
Policy

Priscilla Mendenhall  
Executive Director  
Cville Immigrant Freedom  
Fund

Theanvy Kuoch  
Executive Director  
Khmer Health Advocates

Diana M V Shaw  
Executive Director  
Lanai Community Health  
Network

Amy Hinojosa  
President and CEO  
MANA, A National Latina  
Organization

Hilary Shelton  
Washington Bureau  
Director  
NAACP

Ronald Manderscheid  
Executive Director  
NACBHDD

Cresta Archuletta  
Executive Director  
National Association of  
Hispanic Nurses

Ricardo Byrd  
Executive Director  
National Association of  
Neighborhoods

David Johns  
Executive Director  
National Black Justice  
Coalition

Brian Hudich  
Executive Director  
National Coalition for  
LGBT Health

Kelly Buckland  
Executive Director  
National Council on  
Independent Living

Curtis Decker  
Executive Director  
National Disability Rights  
Network

Yanira Cruz  
President/CEO  
National Hispanic Council  
on Aging

Justin G. Nelson  
Co-Founder & President  
National LGBT Chamber  
of Commerce

Justin Vélez-Hagan  
Executive Director  
National Puerto Rican  
Chamber of Commerce

M. Isabelle Chaudry  
Senior Policy Manager  
National Women's Health  
Network

Mark Misrok  
Executive Director  
National Working Positive  
Coalition

Lee Page  
Senior Associate  
Advocacy Director  
Paralyzed Veterans of  
America

Brady Buckner  
President  
Partnership for Innovation  
and Empowerment

Sana Chehimi  
Director of Policy &  
Advocacy  
Prevention Institute

Yousra Yusuf  
President  
South Asian Public Health  
Association

Dr. Charles Steele  
President/CEO  
Southern Christian  
Leadership Conference

Julie Ward  
Senior Executive Officer  
of Public Policy  
The Arc of the United  
States

Robin Tinnon  
Executive Director  
We All Rise

Candace Waterman  
President & CEO  
Women Impacting Public  
Policy

CC: Congresswoman Judy Chu, Chairwoman, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus  
Congresswoman Karen Bass, Chairwoman, Congressional Black Caucus  
Congressman Joaquin Castro, Chairman, Congressional Hispanic Caucus