



April 24, 2020

Dear Governor Kelly and Governor Parson:

There is an urgent need to systematically collect and publish data on COVID-19 by race, ethnicity and zip code. Initial reports suggest alarming rates of infection and death among people of color, but the data are incomplete.

Without comprehensive, accurate and transparent facts, Kansas and Missouri lack the information essential to effectively target surveillance, mitigation and treatment efforts. Incomplete data also inhibits our ability to address the long-term health and economic recovery of our states.

On behalf of concerned bi-state stakeholders, El Centro, Health Forward Foundation, and the Urban League of Greater Kansas City join together to urge both Kansas and Missouri to prioritize the collection and public dissemination of COVID-19 testing rates and results, contact tracing, hospitalization and mortality rates, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and zip code. These data are essential to understanding the unique challenges and inequities facing communities of color.

Media reports highlighting nascent data that raise concerns about the disproportionate percentage of COVID-19 related deaths among black, Latino, and other minority populations across the country are widespread. Exploring the data further reveals that as many as 30-50% of COVID-19 case data lacks information about patients' race, ethnicity, or the communities in which they reside. Initial reports by health departments in our region suggest similar concerns.

We applaud efforts by Kansas and Missouri to publish available data about confirmed COVID-19 cases by race and ethnicity. The reports provided at the state level, however, illuminate important gaps: in Missouri, 25% of COVID-19 cases are of unknown race and 34% are of unknown ethnicity. In Kansas, 18% of cases are of unknown race and 19% of cases are of unknown ethnicity.

Yet based on available local race and ethnicity data, black and Latino residents comprise 55% of the confirmed cases reported by in Kansas City, MO, but represent 39% of the city. In Johnson County, KS, 11% of confirmed cases are black residents, while black residents comprise 4% of the county. In Wyandotte County, KS, 25 of the 47 deaths have been black residents.

The data on Hispanic populations in Wyandotte County represents a converse problem in accurate or incomplete data collection. While 28% of the County's population is Hispanic, only 13% of positive cases are among Hispanic community members. The Unified Government Public Health Department suspects that this does not reflect a lower proportion of COVID-19 illness, but rather a lower proportion of Hispanic residents being tested for COVID-19.

Knowing race, ethnicity and zip code is critical to quantifying and deploying necessary resources to the individuals and communities where COVID-19 is having concentrated impact. It provides us a clear picture of the issue to ensure existing social, economic and racial inequities are not exacerbated by this pandemic. Well-documented structural health inequities make communities of color disproportionately vulnerable and susceptible to poor health outcomes. This includes higher prevalence of chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, asthma and obesity - all conditions related to increased severity and mortality among COVID-19 patients. Existing inequities make it essential to understand the degree to which vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected by COVID-19, and the missing data is essential to accomplishing that.

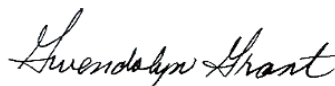
We respectfully urge you to ensure that state and local health departments, public and private health care institutions, and public and private laboratories standardize, collect, and immediately share race, ethnicity, and zip code data with your respective departments of health, in a manner consistent with health privacy laws. These insights will enhance the data you're currently reporting and ensure clinical providers, researchers, funders, and policymakers don't miss an opportunity to detect and understand the barriers and find solutions that impact access to healthcare services by people of color.

We along with the listed supporting organizations' stand ready to collaborate with your administrations as you consider how to ensure timely and accurate demographic data collection and release. Please let us know how we can best engage to ensure a just and equitable response.

Respectfully,



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CC: Dr. Randall Williams, Director, MO DHSS
Dr. Lee Norman, Secretary of Health, KDHE

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:

ACLU of Kansas
Alliance for a Healthy Kansas
Bionexus KC
Black Chamber of Commerce
Black Excellence KC
Black Health Care Coalition
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City
Blaqout
Central Avenue Betterment Association
Children's Services Fund of Jackson County
City of Kansas City, MO City Council
Civic Council of Greater Kansas City
Community Health Council of Wyandotte County
Community Housing of Wyandotte County
Community Care Network of Kansas
Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas
Compass Health Network
Comprehensive Mental Health Services
Full Employment Council
Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
Greater Kansas City Community Foundation
Guadalupe Centers
Hall Family Foundation
Health Care Collaborative of Rural Missouri
Health Partnership Clinic
Heartland Chamber of Commerce
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Greater Kansas City Hispanic Development Fund
Office of Hispanic Ministries – Archdiocese of Kansas City Kansas

Jackson County Community Mental Health Fund
Johnson County Department of Health and Environment
JUNTOS Center for Advancing Latino Health
Kansas Action for Children
Kansas Appleseed
Kansas Health Institute
Kansas City, KS Chapter of the NAACP
Kansas City Medical Society
Kansas City Medical Society Foundation
Kansas City, MO Chapter of the NAACP
Kansas/Missouri Dream Alliance
Kauffman Foundation
KC Care Health Center
Kansas City MO Health Department
Latino Health for all Coalition
LISC
Mid-America Regional Council
Mattie Rhodes Center
Mental Health Association of the Heartland
Metro Organization for Racial and Economic Equity (MORE2)
Metro Council of Community Behavioral Health Centers
Missouri Budget Project
Missouri Health Care for All
Missouri Primary Care Association
Missouri Jobs with Justice
Missouri Legislative Black Caucus
REACH Healthcare Foundation
ReDiscover Mental Health
Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center
Sharon Lee Family Health Center
Shirley's Kitchen Cabinet

Southern Christian Leadership
Conference
Street Medicine KC
Swope Health
The Seed House – La Casa de la Semilla
Topeka Center for Peace and Justice
Tri-County Mental Health Services
United Community Services of Johnson
County

Unified Government of Wyandotte
County Public Health Department
United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
United Way of Greater Kansas City
Urban Neighborhood Initiative
Urban Summit
Uzazi Village
Vibrant Health
Wyandot Behavioral Health Network
Wyandotte Health Foundation