

# HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Resolution HHH-21-14

## A RESOLUTION ON COVID-19 AND HEALTH DISPARITIES ACROSS AMERICA

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators' (NBCSL) fifteen (15) policy committees focus on improving the health and well-being of African American communities by encouraging systematic public policy change;

WHEREAS, despite the efforts of health care professionals, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged state and national healthcare systems; and exposed the deep-rooted health disparities and outcomes affecting African Americans, Hispanic-Americans and other communities of color;

WHEREAS, African Americans are five times more likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19 than their white counterparts, and those from Hispanic or Latino backgrounds are four times more likely;

WHEREAS, structures of systemic racism, implicit biases in medical institutions, less or lack of access to high-quality care, residential segregation, higher rates of comorbidities and underlying health conditions, and lower wage jobs deemed “essential” have put communities of color at greater risk of COVID-19 exposure and severe illness;

WHEREAS, African Americans encounter disproportionately higher mortality and morbidity from Maternal and Infant Mortality, Heart Disease, Cancer, Stroke, Diabetes, Asthma, and Mental Illness, among many other conditions;

WHEREAS, African American women are 4 times more likely to die in childbirth than white women, and the racial discrepancies in maternal death rates persist even when controlling for socioeconomic status and education;

WHEREAS, African Americans and other communities of color are under-represented in clinical trials due to systemic obstacles such as mistrust of the medical establishment and lack of affordable transportation to clinical trial sites; and

WHEREAS, ongoing data limitations are creating barriers to tailor prevention and treatment strategies aimed at communities facing the highest risk of harm from COVID-19.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) urges federal, state and county legislators and officials to enact policies and adopt a multi-pronged approach to address the inequities in medical care affecting the American community, particularly due to the debilitating effects of COVID-19;

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL will work with our various partners, governmental agencies, and the private sector to leverage their expertise and support the development of a safe and effective preventive vaccine for COVID-19, ensuring all communities, specifically marginalized and diverse ones, have equitable and timely access;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL will call on our partners and the private sector to accelerate the ongoing work to screen compound libraries to identify potential therapeutic treatments for COVID-19;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL believes that while a vaccine is needed quickly that we can in way sacrifice patient safety, and that any approval should be completely transparent to fully ensure the patient's safety and trust in the process;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL will work with our members, policymakers, governmental agencies, and the private sector to emphasize the importance of recruiting underserved and underrepresented patients, utilizing diverse clinical trial personnel, ensuring language accessibility, and improving awareness and education about clinical trials in underrepresented populations to facilitate greater trust and participation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL calls on states and policymakers to support healthcare workers and organizations by evaluating and enhancing medical education and training including education on implicit bias and racial disparities, and providing them with protective equipment, financial support and mental health resources to ensure they have the tools and support they need to provide quality care;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL strongly urges all states and federal legislators to recognize this crisis, develop new solutions, increase the available resources, study the disparities showcased by COVID-19, develop solutions, and share best practices to end the systemic racial inequality in patient outcomes in the United States;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL believes that this pandemic has exacerbated racial disparities and urges additional resources to be provided to communities of color, to stop the gap in health outcomes from growing and to allow that gap to close; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

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**SPONSOR(S):** Representative Laura Hall (AL), Representative Gregory Porter (IN), Representative Robin Shackleford (IN), Senator Jean Breaux (IN), and Representative Karen Camper (TN)

**Committee of Jurisdiction:** Health and Human Services Policy Committee

**Certified by Committee Co-Chairs:** Representative David J. Mack, III (SC) and Senator Marilyn Moore (CT)

**Ratified in Plenary Session:** Ratification Date is December 3, 2020

**Ratification is certified by:** Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC), President