



NAACP
Pennsylvania
STATE CONFERENCE

PRESS RELEASE



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Allegheny County

CONTACT: Kenneth L. Huston
412-287-9507

Email: pastatepresident2019@gmail.com

COVID-19 IMPACT ON AFRICAN AMERICANS

This week from April 6 through April 12, 2020, is National Public Health Week. The theme of *Looking Back, Moving Forward* presents an opportune time to speak to the disparate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our Brown and Black population, particularly African Americans.

The shock for some that the pandemic is having a disparate impact on African Americans is certainly no surprise to most African Americans. Throughout history, multiple factors such as the lack of health insurance, access to health care, racism and discrimination, socio-economic status, food security, nutrition, and housing all impact the kind of care that African Americans have received in the past and most definitely are heightened in the COVID-19 crisis.

The dilemma is one that has been ongoing. During this time in which we have had to establish being at home from day to day, having major communication on laptops, computers, ipads and phones, the digital divide has greatly increased. Children are at home and for those without the technological capacity to keep up educationally, or able to access meals because they are not in school, has created an exceedingly high amount of stress on families. Some parents/guardians may have jobs, but no childcare. Many others may not have jobs, adequate housing for children who are now home all day nor food to eat. The threat of contracting COVID-19 is intensified for many African Americans who may already have underlying health diseases which puts them at greater risk to contracting the disease.

Moving forward, health disparities which also includes criminal justice reform must be candidly addressed to acknowledge the disproportionate impact of disease that has taken its toll on the African American population in this country. It must be dealt with in a way that causes a substantial change in the quality of life that can be experienced by African Americans. Until the social determinants of health data is studied to understand the disparate causes, strategies to improve health outcomes cannot be achieved. Health is everything. Possibly, this current epidemic poses a unique opportunity to commit once and for all to seriously take the action necessary to drastically improve health outcomes.

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Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest nonpartisan civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities. The Pennsylvania State Conference was established in 1934 and pursues the same mission throughout the Commonwealth.