

# Diminishing Health Disparity Gaps During a Pandemic

## "A Crisis Within A Crisis"

### COVID-19 in Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups

- Health differences between racial and ethnic groups are often due to economic and social conditions
- Current data suggests that there is a disproportionate burden of illness and death among racial and ethnic minority groups
- The CDC reports that there is an overrepresentation of Black people among hospitalized patients with COVID-19
- Black and brown people in almost every state with racial data available have higher contraction and death rates of COVID-19 compared to White people

### Factors That Influence Racial & Minority Group Health

#### Living Conditions

- Living conditions may contribute to underlying health conditions and make it difficult to prevent COVID-19 infection and seek treatment
- Racial residential segregation is a fundamental cause of health disparities
- Institutional racism has led to many minorities living in densely populated areas
- Many racial-ethnic minorities reside in neighborhoods that are farther away from grocery stores and medical facilities



#### Lower Access to Care & Underlying Health Conditions

- A lack of having health insurance: compared to whites, Hispanics are 3X as likely and Blacks are 2X as likely to be uninsured
- Blacks are more likely than Whites to report not being able to see a doctor due to cost
- Inadequate access is driven by a long-standing distrust of the health care system, language barriers, and financial implications
- Compared to Whites, Blacks experience higher rates of death and prevalence of chronic conditions
- Stigma and systemic inequalities may undermine prevention efforts, increase levels of chronic and toxic stress, and sustain health disparities

#### Work Circumstances

- Racial-ethnic minorities are more likely to be part of the "essential" workforce causing over-exposure and increased cases of COVID-19 infection
- These essential frontline workers include bus drivers, food service, cashiers, janitors, and stockers

#### Criminalization

- Wearing PPE such as facemasks has caused more Black men to be stopped by the police inside stores
- Consequently, over policing during COVID-19 has led to some Black people being less likely to utilize PPE



## How to Reduce the Racial Gaps in COVID-19 Deaths

- Immediate release of demographic data to formulate better preparedness plans for waves of COVID-19
- Placement of testing and triage centers in Black neighborhoods
- Essential workers should have paid leave to reduce viral exposure and spread
- Essential workers should have hazard pay as they risk their lives as frontline workers during the pandemic
- The federal government and states need to provide a living wage to reduce dependency on federal and state aid

## Public Health Policy Solutions



- **The COVID-19 Racial and Ethnic Disparities Task Force Act of 2020:** assists with oversight of the influence of the federal response on health equity
- **The Community Solutions for COVID-19 Act:** would provide targeted grant funding allowing interventions to be directly informed by the most affected communities
- **HEROES Act of 2020:** includes many high priority areas for communities of color such as free testing and treatment for COVID-19 for all individuals
- **Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2020:** funding to close health gaps for individuals facing barriers to care

## The Federal Government is Taking Action By...

- Collecting data, monitoring, and tracking disparities among racial and ethnic groups in the number of COVID-19 cases, complications, and deaths
- Supporting partnerships between organizations, scientific researchers, and community members to address the needs for COVID-19 prevention information in racial-ethnic minority communities
- Providing clinical guidance to racial-ethnic minority schools, workplaces, and community settings on how to slow the spread of COVID-19