



May 27, 2020

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Brady:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the efforts the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is taking to help racial and ethnic minority groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report found that “race and ethnicity data from 580 patients hospitalized with lab-confirmed COVID-19 found that 45% of individuals for whom race or ethnicity data was available were white, compared to 59% of individuals in the surrounding community. However, 33% of hospitalized patients were black compared to 18% in the community and 8% were Hispanic, compared to 14% in the community. These data suggest an overrepresentation of blacks among hospitalized patients. Among COVID-19 deaths for which race and ethnicity data were available, identified death rates among Black/African American persons (92.3 deaths per 100,000 population) and Hispanic/Latino persons (74.3) that were substantially higher than that of white (45.2) or Asian (34.5) persons.”

These statistics are alarming and our scientists are racing to understand why. In the meantime, our commitment to ensuring access to clinical trials and available treatments for racial and ethnic minority groups is unwavering. That’s why we have taken the following steps and plan to do more in the near future:

- The Office of Minority Health (OMH) announced a competitive funding opportunity to invest up to \$40 million for the development and coordination of a strategic network of national, state, territorial, tribal and local organizations to deliver important COVID-19-related information to racial and ethnic minority, rural and socially vulnerable communities hardest hit by the pandemic.
- CDC is collecting data to monitor and track disparities among racial and ethnic groups in the number of COVID-19 cases, complications, and deaths to share broadly and inform decisions on how to effectively address observed disparities. These data will be translated into information to improve the clinical management of patients, allocation of resources, and targeted public health information. Supporting partnerships between scientific

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researchers, professional organizations, community organizations, and community members to address their need for information to prevent COVID-19 in racial and ethnic minority communities.

- The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) issued a Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) to highlight the urgent need for research on the impact of the novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic causing COVID-19 disease outbreaks and the resulting disruptions on individual and social wellbeing, health services use, and health outcomes for NIH-designated health disparity populations.
- Secretary Azar has committed to Congress that “any vaccine should be accessible to all Americans and that affordability should not be a barrier.”

Thank you for your interest in this important matter. Should you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sarah C. Arbes
Assistant Secretary for Legislation