

## NAACP ILLINOIS STATE CONFERENCE

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### STATEMENT REGARDING THE RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND THE BLACK COMMUNITIES IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

It has been said that when America catches a cold, Black America catches pneumonia. This horrific reality proved accurate as we witnessed the devastating impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its appalling influence on the Black and under-served communities.

As of Friday, May 15, 2020, the State of Illinois has a total of 90,369 positive (confirmed) cases of COVID-19, with a total of 538,602 tests performed and regrettably 4,058 deaths. Of the 4,058 deaths, a startling 32% (1,291) of those deaths involved Black Americans, even though the Illinois Black population is only 14.2%. This percentage disproportionality speaks volume regarding the necessity to address foundational issues associated with Black Americans' plight in life.

The Black communities on the South and West Sides of Chicago are identified as "hot spots" for COVID-19. The most vulnerable zip codes are: 60004, 60007 and 60008. Due to the nature of COVID-19 community spread and testing, the number of positive cases is much higher than articulated due to unreported or untested cases in our community.

The NAACP Illinois State Conference activated political forces and medical resources to address the dire consequences of COVID-19 and its disparity on the Black community. Racial injustices, White privilege and inadequate health care have played critical roles on the destructive impact on the Black community.

Our Branches immediately demanded a "call to action" by stipulating the criticality of the following underlying conditions:

- Racial Discrimination and Medical Practice Biases
- Inadequate Congregant Living in Housing Authority Facilities
- Healthy Food Option Deserts
- Climate/Environmental Justice Concerns
- Inadequate Healthcare
- Economic/Labor Injustices
- Educational Inequities

As such, the NAACP Illinois Conference of Branches employed the following local actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. TOWN HALL MEETINGS (at State and Local Levels): A plethora of Town Hall Meetings were conducted throughout the State of Illinois. The Town Hall foci included: COVID-19 and the Black Community; COVID-19 and the Black Male; COVID-19 and Proper Policing; COVID 19 and the Educational Impact.
2. FOOD DISTRIBUTION (at State and Local Levels): Branches provided significant amounts of food staples to address food droughts for the under-served population.
3. TOILETRIES AND HAIR PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTION (at State and Local Levels): Branches provided thousands of toiletries to Black communities to address the gap for those who are now unemployed, or under-employed.
4. MASKS' DISTRIBUTION (at State and Local Levels): Branches provided hundreds of masks to the Black communities to contain the spread of COVID-19.
5. HAND SANITIZERS DISTRIBUTION (at State and Local Levels): Cleans hands are critical to combatting COVID-19, so Branches donated hundreds of hand sanitizers to Black communities.
6. ADVOCATION OF ACCESS TO MEDICATION: People in the Black community no longer have health insurance and cannot afford their Medication, Healthcare and Medical Supplies.
7. ADVOCATION OF MONITOR DATA COLLECTION: To determine the racial makeup of COVID-19 in our State.

Federal, State and Local government are directly responsible for the welfare of ALL the people. As such, we urge our political leaders to provide:

1. Educational resources. Black students should have access to laptops, iPads and high-speed internet (free of charge) for the balance of the school year and throughout the summer to prevent COVID-19 slide and to ensure educational gains are not lost.
2. Food Shortages. Under-resourced communities should have access to local and nearby food banks on a weekly basis to make certain nutritional needs are fulfilled.
3. Tx3-Test, Treat and Trace. Black Americans must be tested for COVID-19, treated accordingly and their actions must be traced, so as to mitigate the spread. Funding and coordination of a strategic plan of action to ensure every Black resident is tested and treated, free of charge. Additionally, the testing sites should be in close proximity to vulnerable neighborhoods by June 30, 2020.
4. Accommodations for the homeless and for those recently released from jails/prison. Appropriate healthcare, food and other provisions should be provided, with the demand to release those awaiting trial, and those who are incarcerated for non-violent crimes.
5. All healthcare workers should be provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), this is inclusive of healthcare janitorial staff, environmental services, as well as those providing non-critical care services in hospitals and nursing homes.
6. Mental health care and wellness checks should be provided to families, free of charge. The services should be advertised via various media sources (radio, television and billboards).
7. Investigatory Exploration. We recommend a task force assemble to determine why COVID-19 has detrimentally impacted the Black communities at an alarming, troublesome and disturbing rate.

The Struggle Is Real!

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