

Statewide Support for Gov. Wolf and Lt. Gov. Fetterman Health Disparity Task Force

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf and Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman announced Wednesday the creation of the [COVID-19 Response Task Force for Health Disparity](#), which will help identify how the pandemic is affecting the state's minority and vulnerable populations. The Health Disparity Task Force, which will be led by Lt. Gov. Fetterman, will prepare recommendations for the governor to address the short- and long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the state's minority and vulnerable communities.

The Health Disparity Task Force was praised by local leaders, legislators and advocates, including the following:

Rep. Stephen Kinsey, Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Chair

"I am in full support of the additional steps that Governor Wolf is taking to reduce the outsized impact that COVID-19 is having on people of color. His administration has done a tremendous job handling this unexpected situation and I hope that this task force helps to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Pennsylvania can't fully heal from this until everyone is safe."

Sen. Sharif Street, Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

"I applaud Governor Wolf's continued leadership during an unprecedented health crisis. Historically, racial disparities have existed throughout every level of American society, symptomatic of systemic structural racism that persists. It is no surprise that black, brown, and Latino communities have been disparately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Health Disparity Task Force is a necessary step in protecting all Pennsylvanians."

Rep. Madeleine Dean, Pennsylvania Commission for Women

"I am pleased the governor and lieutenant governor have created this necessary task force as it has become abundantly clear that we need to develop a better understanding of how this deadly virus affects our ethnic communities. This week, I held a conference call with African American and Latino community leaders about this very issue who raised concerns that this task force seeks to address — including an emphasis on data collection, health access, and outreach. I thank Gov. Wolf and Lt. Governor Fetterman for their leadership and look forward to the findings and guidance of the taskforce to equitably combat this pandemic and keep our people safe."

Charles J. Hooker III, Keystone Human Services President and CEO

"Keystone Human Services supports the work of the Health Disparity Task Force as we address effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a disability service provider for intellectual disability, mental health, and autism services, Keystone Human Services stresses the importance of addressing increased funding and support for frontline workers, many of whom are minority. It is time to address the need to move to a living wage for these essential workers and we look to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Federal Government as our partners in improving the wages of Direct Support Professionals today and in the future."

**Nelly Jimenez, Latin American Community Action of Montgomery County (ACLAMO)
Executive Director and CEO**

“Everyone says we are all in this together, but the inequalities that minority communities are experiencing and the lack of access to resources for them has highlighted the catastrophic impact this crisis will have on families we serve. We can’t not be blind to the fact that our communities will be impacted disproportionately. We have to gather data and create a long-term plan to make systemic changes that includes and positively impact our communities now during the crisis and in the future.”

**Dr. Vasu Singh, Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
Member and Indian American Association of the Lehigh Valley Board Member**

“The API (Asian Pacific Islander) communities face multiple challenges due to language, cultural, social and economic barriers. These barriers result in health disparities, which make the API communities more vulnerable to COVID-19 pandemic. As mentioned by Dr. Rachel Levine, the vital information on race breakdown is missing from approximately 70 percent of the data that we have received about COVID-19. The API community has a special need for accurate, community-specific data, as too often our health data is aggregated as Asian Pacific Islander, flattening the very different health needs that exist between Asian Americans whose families have been in America for 250 years, and refugee communities who were resettled here in the last few years.

“As an Asian American, physician, and a community leader, I strongly support the decision of Gov. Wolf and Lt. Gov. Fetterman to form a COVID-19 Response Task Force for Health Disparity. This initiative will help us to focus and reach out to the API communities individually, to help them in overcoming the barriers, and for the state to address the individual community specific health issues.”