

AMY KLOBUCHAR  
MINNESOTA

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RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2020

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

I write to follow up on the commitment that you made to me on our April 16 phone call that your Administration would work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to compile and release racial demographic information related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic within the next week or two. Two weeks after that call, the partial information that the CDC has made publicly available falls far short of what is needed and fails to reflect the full magnitude of the pandemic across communities of color.

The lack of complete, consistent, and transparent statistics on coronavirus tests, cases, hospitalizations, complications, and deaths disaggregated by race and ethnicity has limited public health officials' ability to understand and effectively address racial health disparities as they work to combat the pandemic. It is also unacceptable that data provided by your Administration does not include data from every state, and there are instances where racial and ethnic data failed to be reported even if other types of demographic data were submitted.<sup>1</sup> As of April 28, the CDC-reported data is missing racial information for 56 percent of all coronavirus cases and 70 percent of laboratory-confirmed coronavirus hospitalizations, and it only includes racial demographic data for coronavirus-related deaths in 26 states.<sup>2</sup>

Despite inadequate data, it is clear that this pandemic is exacerbating preexisting disparities in our country's health care system and in our economy. The incomplete data that the Administration has made available shows that 29 percent of COVID-19 patients whose race was known were African American, despite the fact that African Americans represent about 13

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<sup>1</sup> King, Maya. (2020, April 20). *Black doctors blast 'woefully anemic' data on minority coronavirus cases*. Politico. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/20/minority-cases-coronavirus-197203>

<sup>2</sup> Cases in the US (Accessed April 29, 2020). National Center for Health Statistics: Provisional Death Counts for Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Data Updates by Select Demographic and Geographic Characteristics (Accessed April 29, 2020). COVID View Weekly Summary (Accessed April 29, 2020). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html#anchor\\_1587083500](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html#anchor_1587083500) and [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid\\_weekly/](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid_weekly/) and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html#hospitalizations>

percent of the U.S. population.<sup>3</sup> Native Americans and Latinos also appear to be disproportionately impacted by the virus.<sup>4,5</sup> The delay in releasing comprehensive demographic data on COVID-19 will likely slow efforts to assist these communities and in effect, lead to additional infections, hospitalizations, health complications, and deaths in communities of color.

The significant shortcomings of the demographic information released to date demonstrates why consistent processes and metrics for data collection must be implemented across the country. Vulnerable populations deserve immediate intervention and longer term solutions for pervasive disparities in health care. That is why it is especially imperative during this public health crisis that you fulfill your commitment to provide the comprehensive demographic information that will help identify factors contributing to inequalities so that resources can be directed to those most in need.

As you are aware, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act (H.R. 266), which became law on April 24, included important provisions that can help us to begin to understand and address racial health disparities related to the pandemic.<sup>6</sup> The legislation requires regular reporting of demographic data for COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, and requires a national strategic testing plan that details how the Administration will address disparities in all communities. While this is a positive first step, more must be done to ensure that the data collected and reported are meaningful. For these reports to have significant value, they need to be based on high quality data. I urge you to call on the Department of Health and Human Services to work with state and local health officials and to improve the quality of the data by facilitating streamlined, consistent data collection and reporting procedures.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Cc: Director Robert Redfield, MD, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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<sup>3</sup> Cases in the US. And Quick Facts: United States: Race and Hispanic Origin. (Accessed April 29, 2020). United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045218%20to%20swap%20out%20w/>

<sup>4</sup> Cases in the US. And Quick Facts: United States: Race and Hispanic Origin.

<sup>5</sup> Ostler, Jeffrey. (April 29, 2020). *Disease Has Never Been Just Disease for Native Americans*. The Atlantic. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/disease-has-never-been-just-disease-native-americans/610852/>

<sup>6</sup> Public Law No. 116-139