



children's defense fund ohio

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We are all in this together as long as we do not leave our most vulnerable behind

Statewide health, education, and child advocacy organizations call for DeWine Administration to focus efforts on most vulnerable, provide more data by race/ethnicity, and use data to drive equity

COLUMBUS – State advocacy organizations focusing on health, education, children, and low income communities issued a joint letter to the DeWine Administration calling for health equity in data, decision-making, and how COVID-19 efforts are implemented throughout the state during the public health crisis and as the state re-opens and recovers from the pandemic.

The letter to the administration, which is signed by the [Ohio Poverty Law Center](#), the [Ohio Federation of Teachers](#), [Advocates for Ohio's Future](#), [UHCAN Ohio](#), the [Center for Community Solutions](#), and [Children's Defense Fund-Ohio](#), states, "We are all in this together – so long as the same opportunities for optimal health and wellbeing are shared among all Ohioans and essential health care services are provided to those most in need and provision is not based on our individual race, ethnicity or income."

The state of Ohio has one of the worst health outcomes by race and ethnicity nationally. Recent data shows how overall health status outcomes are 1.3 times worse for Black Ohioans and many pre-existing health conditions that make individuals susceptible to serious illness and death of the coronavirus are over-represented in communities of color because of long-term disinvestment in these communities.

The statement acknowledges that Governor DeWine acted quickly to control the spread of disease, reduce the disease mortality, and mitigate the economic impact. However, it goes on to point out that without direct action to address the needs and challenges of people who have been historically marginalized Ohio will leave many people far worse off than others.

Generations of discrimination and racism have left communities of color under-resourced and less able to withstand a crisis. People in communities of color are less likely to have banks, internet and other technology access, personal transportation, savings, and other resources. Simply put – communities of color in Ohio have not been given the same opportunities to live healthy lives as their white peers.

This crisis should be a wake-up call for leaders to the health disparities that have existed for generations. If Ohio does not make the effort to collect data and examine it based on race, ethnicity, and geography, we will never effectively address decades of marginalizing policies and will only perpetuate them into the future. For example, while we can already see that Black Ohioans are disproportionately



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represented in the number of hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19, we do not know the full scope of the problem because nearly a quarter of cases have no reported race or ethnicity.

To make sure our most vulnerable are not left behind, we must examine and monitor what is occurring in the field and this starts with good data. Let's not ignore the problem by refusing to look.

The initial recommendations offered by organizations include:

- Assure that all COVID-19 data has full reporting of race and ethnicity, and work toward that same goal for all public health and Medicaid data reported by the state. Assure the medical triage criteria and procedures for allocating scarce resources does not discriminate against vulnerable populations.
- Examine the Medicaid testing and treatment data and look for differences in race, disability and geography to get a fuller picture of disease impact and disparity.
- Assure that serological testing to determine exposure is done through sampling of the Ohio population, oversamples by race and ethnicity to assure estimates can be made disaggregated by race and ethnicity.
- Examine utilization of nutrition, cash assistance, housing, and other programs pre and post pandemic.
- Analyze unemployment and unemployment compensation data and SBA loans information to determine whether employees and businesses in communities of color have been left behind.
- Launch a statewide public education and awareness campaign to reach our most vulnerable populations so they know how to access benefits to keep their families healthy and safe.
- Assure that as Ohio moves forward with COVID-19 sampling that the Ohio Department of Public Health use a methodology that is proportionally stratified by geography and demographic data to provide statistically relevant inferences.

The full statement can be found [here](#) or by accessing: https://cdfohio.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/04/Letter_People-are-being-left-behind-15-April-2020-FINAL.pdf

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