



News from: **Office of Mayor Libby Schaaf**

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Local Leaders Announce COVID-19 Racial Disparities Task Force

Oakland CA -- Mayor Libby Schaaf and regional leaders announced the formation of an emergency task force to immediately address the racialized impacts of the COVID-19 virus and create state legislation to reduce health disparities for people of color.

The COVID-19 Racial Disparities Task Force will prioritize an immediate response to the disparate impacts of the virus among people of color, particularly African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American residents, including those experiencing poverty, immigrants, elders, people with disabilities, formerly incarcerated, and unsheltered residents. Secondly, members of the task force will write and pass state legislation with the goal to eliminate the injustice of racial health disparities.

Strategies that the task force will work to advance include:

- Development of a COVID-19 Vulnerability Index measure to inform decisions to strategically target communities most at-risk for prevention and treatment investments
- Proactive collection and review of demographic data and use to inform targeted equity strategies
- Proactive outreach and promote health check-ins to high-risk populations to identify health issues early and facilitate access to further care if indicated; as well as to advise management of health chronic conditions and exposure to virus, etc.
- Interventions to reduce health risk factors for COVID-19 hospitalizations and death, such as medically supportive food, that lower the incidence and severity of common underlying chronic health conditions
- Proactive engagement of entrusted neighborhood leaders, organizations, and health care providers in neighborhoods with high risk to further clarify and remove barriers to services needed to address health disparities, vet strategies, and enlist their assistance in implementation

Media Contacts:

For Mayor Schaaf
Justin Berton
Communications Director
510-499-4305
jberton@oaklandca.gov

For Supe. Wilma Chan
Dave Brown
Chief of Staff
510-693-8319

For Asm. Rob Bonta
Jerome Parra
Communications Director
916-319-2018

For Dr. Tony Iton
Sarah Reyes
Director of Communications
559-443-5306

- Proactive distribution of PPE to community clinics, organizations, and essential businesses serving populations at high risk
- Provision of basic health and safety supplies and provisions to high-risk populations to aid them in sheltering in place and home-based recovery if they become ill
- Provision of isolation space for high risk individuals who cannot safely quarantine at home.
- Messaging targeted to high-risk populations, via trusted networks and in languages spoken
- Strategic community test siting in neighborhoods with high-risk populations, partnering with trusted community organizations
- Raising funds and distributing rapid response assistance in neighborhoods with high at-risk populations, through entrusted organizations and existing networks

The task force will operate under the auspices of the [Oakland Thrives Leadership Council](#), a public-private collective impact council jointly led by Kaiser Permanente, City of Oakland, OUSD, and Alameda County.

The four co-chairs of the task force are:

- Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf
- Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan
- Assemblymember Rob Bonta
- Dr. Tony Iton, Senior Vice President, California Endowment

Inaugural members include Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Supervisor Keith Carson, and Jane Garcia, CEO of La Clinica de la Raza.

“The virus does not discriminate but it does devastate some races more than others,” Mayor Libby Schaaf said. “We must take this unprecedented pandemic to create an unprecedented justice for people of color and vulnerable residents. The goal of our task force is to elevate the reality of racial disparities in healthcare and do everything we can to fix them right now and for the long term.”

Supervisor Chan, Health Committee Chair for Alameda County Board of Supervisors, said, “We must protect our most vulnerable populations during this epidemic including addressing head-on the issues of health disparities. Federal, state, regional and local partners need to be proactive in providing immediate and upstream interventions for those most in danger of illness and morbidity.”

“During this COVID-19 pandemic, it’s important that we confront the many underlying, preexisting health inequities and racial disparities in our society and communities,” Assemblymember Rob Bonta said. “Through this task force and the coalition we have built to address these issues, I am hopeful that we can push for robust policy changes to reduce and remove health disparities for impacted communities in California.”

“African Americans and other Americans of color have been the victims of enduring policy violence for generations,” Dr. Tony Iton said. “Undoing the effects of that violence will take a sustained and concerted effort to reweave our frayed American social contract and create inclusive and equitable policy. We know what we have to do. The doing starts now.”

The immediate operational goals of the task force are to devise ways to reduce the predictable over representation of African American and Native American fatal cases of COVID-19 in Oakland and Alameda County. Additionally, to investigate and respond to risk associated with barriers to social distancing as potentially impacted by crowded living conditions for Latino and Asian residents, and for un-housed people living in Alameda County.

The first Virtual Public Hearing to receive input on the task force’s work will be announced within two weeks.

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