

July 2, 2020

The Honorable Robin Kelly
United States House of Representatives
2416 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kelly:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members, the American Medical Association (AMA) is writing to **express our strong support for H.R. 6585, “Equitable Data Collection and Disclosure on COVID-19 Act.”** The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severely disproportionate impact on our country’s minoritized and marginalized populations, particularly Black, Latinx, and Native American communities. Our members are fully committed to addressing the adverse health outcomes that result from racial and ethnic inequities and which have been further exacerbated throughout this pandemic. However, the ability to accurately track COVID-19 trends and provide equitable public health interventions are dependent on essential changes in data collection at all levels of the government. Such changes include comprehensive, disaggregated, racial and ethnic data collection related to testing, hospitalization, and mortality associated with COVID-19.

Our AMA recognizes that in past crises, such as Hurricane Katrina and during the spread of the H1N1 virus, minoritized, marginalized, and medically underserved populations disproportionately suffered long-lasting financial, environmental, and health-related burdens. These disasters highlight the need for a better understanding of the role played by social determinants of health. Recent studies have shown that to date, more than 40 percent of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s database on COVID-19 lacks basic information on race and ethnicity.¹ Without accurate data that is representative of all our citizens, we cannot appropriately evaluate the unique challenges facing these communities or utilize scientific methodology to develop evidence-based interventions for protecting the health of those who have historically been neglected in pandemic or natural disaster relief efforts.

The Equitable Data Collection and Disclosure on COVID-19 Act is focused on creating a comprehensive and standardized national set of data collection parameters. Under this legislation, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will obtain and post data that is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, sex, age, tribal affiliation, socioeconomic status, disability status, and county. These data points will also incorporate information on COVID-19 testing, hospital and ICU admissions, and fatalities. An underlying goal of this plan is to provide guidance on how we can better collect, develop, and analyze racial, tribal, and demographic data in responding to future waves of the coronavirus.

¹ <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/health-law-and-business/trump-is-pressed-for-more-covid-data-by-race-to-fix-inequities>

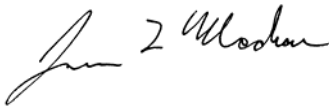
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The AMA believes the provisions in this legislation are an important step forward in helping to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequities. For these reasons, the AMA urges Congress to pass H.R. 6585. Thank you for your leadership in introducing the Equitable Data Collection and Disclosure on COVID-19 Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD