

County Board of Supervisors Testimony

05/19/2020

*Prepared Testimony regarding COVID-19 Equity Taskforce & Data Collection*

Good Morning Board Chair Jacob and Supervisors Cox, Gaspar, Fletcher and Desmond.

My name is Christie Hill. I am the Deputy Director of Advocacy for the ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties. The ACLU is a proud member of the Invest in San Diego Families Coalition.

**We are here today to urge the Board of Supervisors to develop a COVID-19 Equity Taskforce comprised of local city leaders, nonprofits, community stakeholders, academics and health care providers. The mission of this taskforce will be to assess and offer recommendations to address the impact of COVID-19 in vulnerable communities, especially Black, Latino and Pacific Islander communities; and the impact on people who are unhoused. This taskforce can help save lives.**

By centering our collective response on meeting the needs of the region's most vulnerable communities, we can ensure an equitable and efficient process that is inclusive of all San Diegans. Across the country and here in California, we see clear evidence of the devastating, disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on people and communities of color, especially African American and Latino communities.

In San Diego County, we know the virus is having a disproportionate impact on communities in the South Bay. We also know that the workers deemed essential during this time are more likely to be Black and brown and in low-wage, no-benefit jobs. This pandemic has exposed deeply rooted inequities in our region, state and nation. We call on our county government to have the courage, conviction and humanity this moment requires. We call on you to ensure that racial injustice and equity issues are acknowledged and addressed in our region's response to COVID-19 and our recovery.

Oakland, New York and other cities have created taskforces to examine the impact of racial and health disparities in their COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. San Diego County must also be a leader in this area. A COVID-19 Equity Taskforce will help us identify opportunities to address pre-existing disparities that make people more likely to become seriously ill or die from COVID-19. The taskforce will also ensure that communities hardest hit by the pandemic and impacted businesses owned by people of color and women receive the help they need to recover.

What we know is problematic. What we do not yet know is potentially even more devastating. In addition to our call for a COVID-19 Equity Taskforce, we reiterate our call for the county to collect additional demographic data, including but not limited to race, associated with COVID-19 testing, confirmed cases, hospitalizations and deaths. While testing has ramped up, we still do not have a comprehensive picture of the true impact of COVID-19 in our region. Data collection is essential. **We cannot manage what we do not measure.** We also ask that your daily updates provide specific information about the unhoused and incarcerated populations – including testing, confirmed cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

**We the people are counting on you, our elected representatives, to act responsibly in this unprecedented public health crisis.**

On behalf of the ACLU, thank you for your public service and for your leadership.