



CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU  
Governor

## Governor's Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion

May 4, 2020

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His Excellency Christopher T. Sununu  
Governor of the State of New Hampshire  
State House  
107 North Main Street  
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Sununu,

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Diversity and Inclusion, I write to respond to the State of New Hampshire's recent release of demographic data related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We welcome the State's efforts, alongside dozens of other states, to release this data, which is critical to understanding how the pandemic is affecting the most vulnerable populations. This data clearly indicates that New Hampshire is not an exception, and that COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting the state's Black, Hispanic, and Latino populations and adequate data for American Indians is absent.<sup>1</sup> We respectfully urge the state to act on this data by establishing a Granite State team grounded in cross-cultural research methods to unpack the data and create a plan of action for addressing the disparate impact of COVID-19 on particular racial and ethnic communities.

According to the data the state released on April 23rd, Hispanic and Latino Granite Staters make up 6.1% of cases but just 3.9% of the population of New Hampshire's population according to census data. Similarly, Black Granite Staters account for 5.4% of coronavirus cases so far, while they are just 1.4% of the population. The disproportionate impact illustrated by this data is consistent with the data released from other states, which has shown that people of color are being infected with, and dying from COVID-19 at disturbingly and disproportionately high rates.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Navajo Nation, the largest reservation in the country with a population of more than 350,000, reported it had more confirmed cases of COVID-19 per capita than almost every U.S. state, behind only New York and New Jersey. See Miller, Hayley, HuffPost, *Navajo Nation Reports More Coronavirus Cases Per Capita Than All But 2 U.S. States*, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/navajo-nation-coronavirus-per-capita\\_n\\_5e94b532c5b6a50d4ae6d7e7](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/navajo-nation-coronavirus-per-capita_n_5e94b532c5b6a50d4ae6d7e7).

These disparities are dismaying, but not surprising given the plethora of existing health disparities and other social, economic and cultural inequalities that make people of color particularly vulnerable to contracting and dying from COVID-19. Although public health officials recommend working from home to stop the spread of the virus, nationally, only 20% of Black workers and 16% of Latino workers are able to work from home.<sup>2</sup> Black people are also more likely to be uninsured and live in communities without access to quality healthcare facilities, leading to disproportionate rates of chronic diseases such as asthma, hypertension, and diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

Experience, and now data, has made clear that COVID-19 is not an equal opportunity virus in the Granite State. The inequitable effects of the pandemic in New Hampshire are far reaching and include, but are not limited to: lack of education access for those without technology or experiencing language barriers; and, extreme instability for those not able to benefit from government assistance due to immigration status. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing problems such as food insecurity for those who have lost employment and are not able to work from home.

For these reasons, we urge the state to establish a team and plan of action for addressing the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such a plan should include: ongoing release of demographic data; a thorough analysis of all available data using a cross-cultural research method to examine the social, cultural, and systemic factors contributing to differences and disparities in COVID-19 related outcomes; specific state resources that will be allocated to address these disparities; and specific steps that the state will undertake to remedy the disparate impact of COVID-19, which is likely to be a public health concern for months, if not years to come. Such a comprehensive analysis will provide state officials with a greater understanding of the resources needed to address the disparities identified, and ensure that New Hampshire can better protect all communities during the pandemic.

In addition, we are hearing of LGBTQ youth impacted by extreme social isolation, people facing limited access to mental health treatment, people facing limited access to substance use treatment, people facing domestic and sexual violence, and people with disabilities unable to access essential public transportation. We recognize and commend the state for taking steps to address the disparities arising for Granite Staters seeking substance use treatment and facing domestic and sexual violence. We urge the state to take steps to increase support for other communities facing disproportional effects from COVID-19's collateral impacts.

A plan of action to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and other disparately impacted communities is necessary not just to address the current crisis. Establishing sound mechanisms for analyzing critical demographic data, and focusing the

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<sup>2</sup> See *Economic News Release*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Sept. 24, 2019), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/flex2.t01.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> See Reis Thebault, Andrew Ba Tran, & Vanessa Williams, *The Coronavirus Is Infecting and Killing Black Americans at an Alarming High Rate*, Washington Post (April 7, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/04/07/coronavirus-is-infecting-killing-black-americans-an-alarming-high-rate-post-analysis-shows/?arc404=true>.

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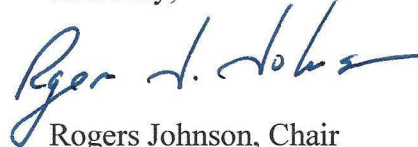
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relevant actors on addressing the disproportionate impacts of this pandemic will serve the longer-term health equity of the Granite State.

To the extent that such a plan of action exists or steps have been taken to address the differences and disparities in COVID-19 related outcomes, we urge the state to detail the plan and publicize the steps that have been taken so members of communities of color and other disparately impacted communities can access any resources or information as they become available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rogers Johnson", is written over the typed name.

Rogers Johnson, Chair  
Governor's Advisory Council on Diversity  
and Inclusion

cc: Lori Shibinette, Commissioner  
New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services