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Wolf and Lt. Gov. Fetterman Announce Pennsylvania COVID-19 Response Task Force for Health Disparity Report

York, PA – In mid-April, Governor Tom Wolf and Lt. Governor John Fetterman announced the creation of a [COVID-19 Response Task Force for Health Disparity](#) to help communicate issues about how the pandemic is affecting the state's minority and marginalized populations.

"About a month after the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in Pennsylvania, I asked Lt. Gov. Fetterman to chair a new task force that would identify any differences in health outcomes for different populations," Gov. Wolf said. "And to make recommendations to ensure every Pennsylvanian, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background, has equal opportunity to survive and thrive during this pandemic and beyond."

After months of weekly meetings and outreach from task force members to marginalized community members, the task force completed its [report](#) and presented it to the governor earlier this week. Today, the governor and lieutenant governor highlighted the recommendations in the report at an event at the York County YMCA, joined by Sec. of Health Dr. Rachel Levine.

The report includes six recommendations focused on these policy topics related to health disparity, ranked in order of urgency: housing, criminal justice, food insecurity, health disparity, education and economic opportunities. According to the report, each area either directly or indirectly affects the health of Pennsylvanians and must be addressed to appropriately remove the disparities that have existed for generations and have only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

"I just want to thank this diverse Task Force and group of stakeholders who gave such important insight towards the creation of this report", said Lt. Governor John Fetterman. "With 57 specific policy recommendations, I believe that this report will be beneficial in policy development to help end the health disparities in our marginalized communities, which have been so vastly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic."

Dr. Levine offered insight into the work of the Department of Health's Health Equity Response Team and how that work contributes to her agency's overall success battling the pandemic and health inequities that exist beyond COVID.

"Health disparities and health equity have been a focus of the Wolf Administration and the Department of Health long before COVID-19 swept through our country," Dr. Levine said. "Our actions as a community can lessen the impact COVID-19 has on our fellow Pennsylvanians most at risk. You can answer the call to stop the spread when you wear a mask. You can answer the call to stop the spread when you avoid large public gatherings. You can answer the call to stop the spread when you use hand sanitizer and wash your hands frequently."

The report is one step in many toward fair, equitable and accessible treatment of all Pennsylvanians. Gov. Wolf's five commissions played a key role on the task force and were in daily communication with those disproportionately impacted by COVID, especially Black and Latino communities.

The work of the task force will help inform an internal steering committee on dismantling racism that Gov. Wolf established recently.

"The steering committee is made up of key cabinet members working together with our policy leaders to build a short- and long-term policy agenda to dismantle the systemic racism and resulting inequities that exist around us, inequities that have been exacerbated by this pandemic," Gov. Wolf said. "My goal is to be intentional in all aspects of commonwealth work to maintain a commitment to a diverse, culturally responsive workforce.

"I'm grateful to the members of the task force for their work. It is our intention to use the information gathered in this report as the basis for lasting change."

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