Governor Whitmer Creates the Michigan Coronavirus Task Force on Racial Disparities

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Media Contact: **Press@Michigan.gov**

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Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II Will Chair the Task Force

LANSING, Mich. -- Today, Governor Gretchen Whitmer created the Michigan Coronavirus Task Force on Racial Disparities. The task force, chaired by Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II, will consist of leaders across state government and health care professionals from communities most impacted by the spread of coronavirus. The task force will hold it's first meeting this week.
As of today, over 40% of COVID-19 deaths in Michigan are African Americans, but only 14% of Michiganders are African Americans. The Michigan Coronavirus Task Force on Racial Disparities will provide the governor with recommendations on how to address this disparity as we work to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our state.

"This virus is holding a mirror up to our society and reminding us of the deep inequities in this country," said Governor Whitmer. "From basic lack of access to health care, transportation, and protections in the workplace, these inequities hit people of color and vulnerable communities the hardest. This task force will help us start addressing these disparities right now as we work to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Michigan."

"We know that generations of racial disparities and inequality has a detrimental impact on the lives of people across the state," Lt. Governor Gilchrist said. "The coronavirus pandemic has shown this inequity to be particularly true, especially in the Black community, where the health of our friends and family has been disproportionately impacted. That's why we are taking immediate action to assemble some of the greatest minds to tackle this racial injustice now and in the future."

During the COVID-19 crisis, Governor Whitmer has signed a number of executive orders aimed at protecting people in vulnerable communities. These include orders to temporarily ban evictions and tax foreclosures, expand unemployment benefits, and restore running water for families.

During her first year as governor, Governor Whitmer took several steps aimed at lifting Michigan families out of poverty. She announced the Michigan Poverty Task Force within the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), which will provide her with recommendations on how to get more families on a path to success.

She has been working with providers and universities to establish implicit bias training in their curriculum so that as people of color seek health care, they'll be treated with equal dignity and respect, which will yield better outcomes. And in October, she raised asset test limits to make it easier for families to access food assistance and assist them in paying for necessities like rent, utilities, and warm clothes.

"It shouldn't take a global pandemic for us to address these problems" Governor Whitmer continued. "It shouldn't take a crisis for us to expand unemployment benefits, ensure protections for workers who are sick, or expand access to quality, affordable health care. We're going to come out of this, but we must also learn some hard lessons about the deep problems in our economy that we need real, meaningful solutions on. As we recover from the impact of COVID-19, my administration will continue to focus on long-term solutions for every family in Michigan."

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