Gov. Edwards Announces Funding to the Health Equity Task Force to Examine Causes and Solutions to COVID-19 Racial Disparities

April 24, 2020

Today, Gov. John Bel Edwards announced that he is making $500,000 from the Governor's COVID-19 Response Fund available to the Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Taskforce to examine the causes and possible solutions to the high rate of deaths from the coronavirus within Louisiana's African-American community and other impacted populations.

"The disparity in deaths is especially worrisome, and we need to do everything we can to determine why this is happening," said Gov. Edwards. "African-Americans make up approximately 33 percent of our population yet account for nearly 60 percent of the deaths from this virus. We have an obligation to look for answers and this task force will provide recommendations for addressing the health inequities affecting all communities that are most impacted by this virus. Funding is essential for that work to begin as soon as possible. One death is one too many in any community, and I am committed to helping everyone in our state live healthier lives."

Earlier this month, Gov. Edwards initiated the Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Taskforce (/index.cfm/newsroom/detail/2457) as part of a comprehensive response to the COVID pandemic. Early data indicates that the impact of the pandemic has not fallen equitably among Louisianans, with African Americans, seniors and other persons residing in group living disproportionately impacted. The taskforce is comprised of a large group of experts from a variety of relevant sectors of the state and will be led by Dr. Sandra Brown, dean of the Southern University's College of Nursing and Allied Health and Dr. Thomas LaVeist, dean of Tulane University's Public Health and Tropical Medicine

As part of the taskforce's work, members will conduct assessments of the status of the state's response as it affects vulnerable populations and issue a series of actionable reports with recommendations to assure that the state emerges from the pandemic in a stronger position - focused on health equity and improved health outcomes for all Louisianans.

The funding will be used to conduct the following:

- Science-based research
- A comprehensive evidenced-based analysis of the determinants of health equity that influences racial health disparities
- Evidenced-based analysis of interventions that positively impact health equity and address disparities.
- An examination of the population dynamics (political, economic, social, technological, and legal) that are indicative of health equity and disparities to formulate a state wide dashboard.
- Provide health awareness educational media campaigns.
- Assessments of the status of the state's response as it affects vulnerable populations and the impact of COVID-19.

The Governor's COVID-19 Response Fund is funded through the Irene W & C.B. Pennington Family Foundation, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation.

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