



Sandra R. Williams
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Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review

To: Governor Mike DeWine
Lt. Governor John Husted
Dr. Amy Acton
From: State Senator Sandra Williams
Date: April 9, 2020
RE: The Impact of COVID-19 on Minority Communities

Dear Governor DeWine, Lieutenant Governor Husted and Dr. Acton,

First, I would like to thank you for including racial information as it relates to COVID-19 in one of your daily press conferences last week. It is important that we gain a better understanding of how this virus is particularly affecting minority communities and how to better “flatten the curve” in such areas. I would like to request that you provide this information daily so citizens can capture the entire picture of how COVID-19 is impacting all communities.

I am writing today to request racial breakdowns of those who have tested positive for COVID- 19 by county, zip code, and census tract. The data should also include racial information on those who have been tested, who have been hospitalized, and who have died due to COVID-19. Having this information readily available will help agencies and elected officials to assist your administration in conveying the severity and importance of health and safety procedures throughout all communities; as well as, ensure that resources are being properly allocated to minority communities. It is also critically important that we use these statistics to drive resource allocations from the federal government and any other type of emergency responses.

As I’m sure you have seen, recent news reports have uncovered that COVID-19 is disproportionately effecting communities of color across the nation. Just yesterday, *The Columbus Dispatch* published an article, reporting that “Black Americans are overwhelmingly dying of coronavirus at much higher rates compared to other Americans in some major cities, but most federal officials and states are not keeping track or releasing racial data on coronavirus victims, raising concerns about care for the nation’s most vulnerable populations.”¹ During these uncertain times, we have a duty to ensure public trust by being able to demonstrate that everyone, regardless of race and ethnicity, will be properly test and cared for. We can

¹ <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200408/why-are-so-many-black-people-dying-from-coronavirus>

accomplish this by providing statistical data that demonstrates all Ohioans are receiving equitable medical treatment.

If the data shows that there is a significant disparity here in Ohio, we must quickly act to understand why and correct it. In my district, and throughout the state, many African Americans live in denser communities where social distancing is more difficult. Many are still working in “essential jobs” and are required to use public transportation to get to those jobs, increasing exposure to COVID-19. Often times, predominately minority communities, in denser populations, live in food deserts, where it is impossible to buy two-weeks’ worth of groceries and transport it to their homes on public transit. Or they live in an area that lacks appropriate medical facilities and information is not conveyed properly—especially in times such as this. It is crucial that we work to overcome these barriers.

This request is time-sensitive because more and more people are being impacted by COVID-19 daily. **Please forward the requested data by Monday, April 13, 2020.** Thank you for your leadership and quick action. I look forward to ongoing communication and collaboration as we continue to navigate these uncertain times.

Sincerely,



SANDRA WILLIAMS
State Senator | Assistant Minority Whip
District 21