

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2020

The Honorable Mark Ghaly
Secretary
California Health and Human Services Agency
1600 Ninth Street, Room 460
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Ghaly,

We write regarding concerning trends seen across the country in racial disparities among COVID-19 patients. We applaud you and your team's tireless efforts to combat COVID-19 in our state, as well as California's efforts over the years to address health disparities and the social determinants of health. We therefore urge you to prioritize the collection and public release of disaggregated demographic data on COVID-19 infections and mortality, as well as to address the underlying drivers of these disparities.

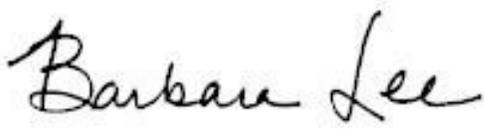
In times of emergency, vulnerable populations are rendered more vulnerable, and longstanding health disparities are magnified. For example, over the course of this pandemic we have seen geographic disparities in access to testing, in large part a reflection of lesser access to care in disadvantaged communities. Despite lower testing rates, reports from across the country indicate higher infection and mortality rates in communities of color.

Policymakers at both the state and federal levels must address these gaps, but we rely upon high-quality data from our partners in the states. Data is critical to addressing racial, socioeconomic, and other disparities in our health system, which often reflect underlying social determinants of health. While regulators at all levels should improve their efforts to collect, analyze and report this data at all times, this effort has rarely been more critical than it is now.

California has been a leader in collecting detailed data by race, primary language, ethnicity, such as the California Health Interview Survey to the passage of AB-1726 in 2016. However, at least nine states have released race and ethnicity data on COVID-19 cases; California should be amongst them. Releasing this data would better inform our understanding of COVID-19 itself as well as federal, state, and local responses to the pandemic. While CHHS and its partners are doubtless juggling multiple priorities as it combats COVID-19, this should be among them.

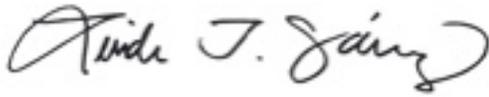
Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



JIMMY GOMEZ
Member of Congress

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ
Member of Congress



JUDY CHU
Member of Congress



ALAN LOWENTHAL
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NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN
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