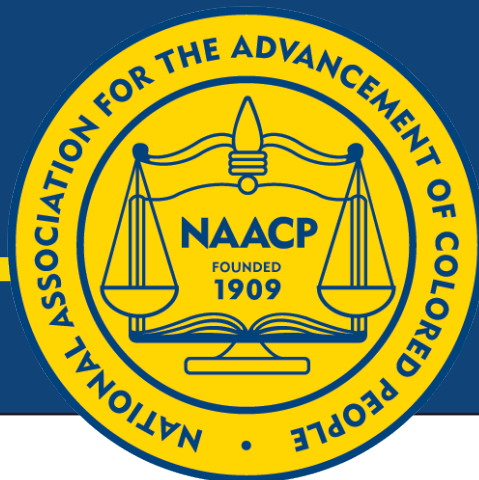




CONNECTICUT

NAACP

COVID-19 ACTION PLAN



[ctnaacp.org](http://ctnaacp.org)



**CT NAACP  
Recommendations  
and Guidance to  
State Planners and  
Policymakers Regarding  
Mitigating the Effects  
of COVID-19 in  
Communities of Color.**



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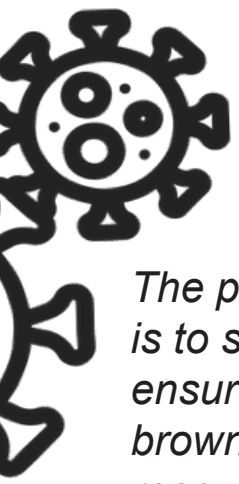
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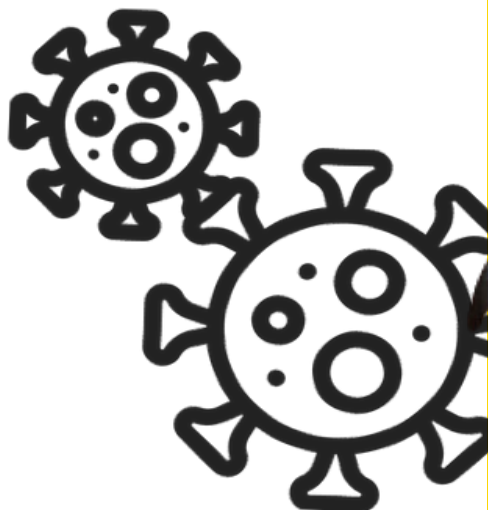
## **Special thanks to ...**

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*The purpose of this report is to suggest ways to ensure that black and brown communities receive resources during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and improve the inequalities they may face during future crises. Due to the Coronavirus(COVID-19) pandemic, black and brown communities are undeniably impacted in these main areas.*

*Unfortunately, Connecticut isn't excused from this national trend.*



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this action plan is to suggest ways to ensure that black and brown communities receive resources during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and improve the inequalities they may face during future crises. Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, black and brown communities are undeniably impacted in a multitude of ways. Unfortunately, Connecticut isn't excused from this national trend. Fairfield, New Haven, and Hartford counties all rank among the top 25 U.S. counties with the most coronavirus-linked deaths, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. In New Haven black residents account for nearly 50% of the city's coronavirus-related deaths. Communities of color are being infected, hospitalized, and are dying at disproportionate rates.<sup>1</sup>

The amount of deaths surrounding black and brown communities in Connecticut, are extremely alarming. According to a recent University of Connecticut health study, black people were twice as likely to contract COVID-19 than their white counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches partnered up with the Connecticut Black & Puerto Rican Caucus to take part in a dialogue with the NAACP's Connecticut COVID-19 Urban Strategic Advisory Committee to speak about what is needed in our urban communities and how to fix the disparities that exist for black and brown folks.

Studies have shown that only 1 in 5 Black Americans can work from home, while the majority are forced to continue working since they are considered "essential workers".<sup>3</sup> The economy has plummeted due to the COVID-19 outbreak, causing many Americans to lose their jobs, especially black and brown workers. Another major cause of the increase in COVID-19 cases in the Black American community is their inability to get tested, many individuals were unable to receive a coronavirus test due to lack of insurance or access to a primary care provider. Throughout the pandemic, there have been numerous health disparities that have impacted communities of color such as the lack of food access, underlying health conditions such as diabetes, asthma and hypertension, lack of insurance or health care and the inability to follow social distancing guidelines due to living in dense minority communities.

Black and brown communities in Connecticut lack COVID-19 testing and data. Black Americans make up 30 percent of COVID-19 patients, according to preliminary nationwide data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>34</sup> Across the United States, more and more minorities are dying due to the health disparities listed above. When the COVID-19 pandemic first surfaced, Americans were told that the virus did not discriminate but with more data becoming available, it is clear that COVID-19 has magnified the systemic inequalities that exist in America.



According to an analysis from the American Public Media (APM) Research Lab, the data concluded that as of May 11th 2020, 17,155 Black Americans were known to have died due to COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the state of Connecticut, black and brown communities are faced with the harsh realities of COVID-19.

State reports indicate that 12 Black Americans per 100,000 total population have died, compared to 9 whites per 100,000.<sup>23</sup> The Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches can no longer stand by and watch black and brown communities erode due to racial biases and gaslighting during this deadly pandemic. To take further action, our partnership with the Connecticut Black & Puerto Rican Caucus curated a dialogue with the NAACP's Connecticut COVID-19 Urban Strategic Advisory Committee featuring numerous committee members from all over the state.

“Some of the things that we are alarmed about is the fact that 30% of blacks who are tested for the coronavirus are positive,” said Committee member, Dr. Cato Laurencin, Designated UCONN Health Director and Professor at University of Connecticut. “Eight percent of whites who are tested for coronavirus are positive. Which implies to me, especially in the context that more blacks are dying, is maybe they are getting treated later if they are being seen later.”<sup>2</sup>

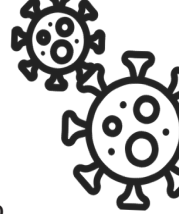
This becomes a social injustice issue as these health disparities become social determinants. According to the Economic Policy Institute, employment has dropped sharply in the COVID-19 labor market and black women are facing the largest losses.<sup>1</sup>

Several factors contribute to Black Americans' increased vulnerability to the coronavirus — factors that are rooted in deep-seeded structural inequalities within and beyond our health care system. African Americans live with a greater burden of disease than their White counterparts, and many of their chronic conditions place them at increased risk for complications from COVID-19. The inequalities within the US healthcare system impact people of color disproportionately and lead to unequal access to services and harsher health outcomes, especially those in low income or urban communities. In addition, the emotional and financial toll of the pandemic has increased the need for mental health services and will continue to increase over time. Urban communities need these resources in order to survive COVID-19.

This report will in hopes allow for the Urban Advisory Committee to work closely with the Governor to improve the effects of COVID-19 in black and brown communities through action. We strive to improve and resolve these issues to develop stronger communities in the State of Connecticut.

*Within this Action Plan, we will focus on:*

**Police Accountability   Education   Public Health   Voting**



As of June 23, 2020, there have been 69% of confirmed COVID-19 cases and 99% of COVID-19 deaths that have been reported for race and ethnicity. Of the 99% of the death cases reported there are only 24% of black and latino reports of death.<sup>18</sup> Although there are programs that support food services for communities, there have to be more in different areas, and they have to be accessible.<sup>21</sup> The latest Census data from before the pandemic showed that African-American workers are six times more likely to rely on public transportation than non-minority workers. There are a number of programs that don't enable individuals to get food on a daily to weekly basis. For example the salvation army only offers visits once per 30 days to families.<sup>2</sup>

According to the annual report from America's Health Ranking 5.4% of CT residents are uninsured.<sup>16</sup> That means there are more than 180,000 residents who are uninsured. A majority of the uninsured are low-income families. Reflecting the more limited availability of public coverage in some states, adults are more likely to be uninsured than children, especially people of color, who are at a higher risk of being uninsured. Ways to improve this are expanding public programs and enforcing employer based coverage. Insurance pools can be created for small business and the self employed, with premiums subsidized to make cover affordable for workers on the low wages.<sup>22</sup> There are a great number of health disparities in the black community compared to the white community. For example, blacks have higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease than other groups, and Black children have a 500% higher death rate from asthma compared with White children. Underlying conditions like this increases the fatality rate if they are exposed to COVID-19.

In order to prevent more coronavirus-related deaths and ensure the health of Connecticut residents we need to work with public health care systems and health care providers. Addressing implicit bias between patients and their providers would be a fundamental step. The attitudes and behaviors of health care providers have been identified as one of many factors that contribute to health disparities. Implicit attitudes are thoughts and feelings that often exist outside of conscious awareness, and thus are difficult to consciously acknowledge and control.<sup>11</sup> Implicit bias during a pandemic will only increase its effects. We suggest making it mandatory for all health care professionals to take Implicit Association Test (IAT), across the State of Connecticut. The test strives to help educate medical students and health care professionals about their unconscious biases that can possibly lead to serious consequences for their patients or shift their clinical decisions. The IAT is not a new concept but can be beneficial to everyone involved. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) was created in 1955 but first published in scientific literature in 1998, the IAT has become the foundation for equity, diversity and inclusion training across many institutions across many institutions.<sup>39</sup> Implementing practices and training such as these can help save many black and brown lives.

Under the direction of the CT State Conference of NAACP Health Committee chaired by James Rawlings, MPH, a multi-tiered strategy is under development to address the critical health inequity issues and pervasive social determinants factors that have fueled the disproportionate COVID-19 excessive exposure rate and excessive deaths of Black and Brown citizens particularly in our large dense urban centers.



As members of the CT NAACP we have long understood the excessive burdens of chronic disease in the State of CT highlighted by our historic report on Health Status of African Americans in CT. This report highlighted many health inequities challenges in CT, inclusive of the excessive comorbidities for minorities starting at 50-55 plus. These latter issues have set the table and allowed this perfect storm of the COVID-19 viral infection to be so deadly and impactful within the Black and Brown communities in CT.

We are recommending that the Governor's office convene a special task force with the CT State Conference of the NAACP Health committee to review, develop and resource a multi-tier action plan to accomplish the following:

### ***Immediate***

- **First as a priority build and sustain a proactive COVID-19 testing and tracking system in our urban centers with an established target of percentage tested during the duration of COVID -19 excessive deadly impact.**
- **Develop a culturally competent Statewide Urban Public Awareness Campaign to support and drive CDC and the State of CT DPH recommendation.**
- **The aggressive undertaking of the two former strategies will prepare to the extent possible our urban centers for any possible second wave of COVID-19.**
- **Assure ready access of PPE of all high risk residents**

### ***Intermediate***

- **Start to build and address social policy policies that contribute to excessive co-morbidities and lack of seamless access to health care resources.**
- **Examples of opportunities to include: Medicaid reimbursement for PCPs, specialty payment coverage, for example in pulmonary clinics our old and young with exacerbated asthma have significant challenges of access. The latter is just one example of such specialty access issues.**
- **Assure ready access to PPE such as mask, gloves and educational material without charge to all community members.**

### ***Longer term***

- **Review social policies that may serve to compromise the quality of life in many sectors of urban living such as the heavy burden of excessive density.**
- **Providing rental/hotel spaces when testing positive to protect families and the community since their residences are often multi families units.**

**Overall, a top priority is preparing for the second wave that is speculated to occur. Communities are looking** towards health care professionals and essential workers to ensure people are aware of symptoms, rising cases and ways to prevent spreading the virus.

# POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Prisons and jails have amplified the infectious COVID-19 disease housing thousands of people each day. Social distancing is nearly impossible inside these facilities due to the size, with constant movement inside and out, and overcrowding. If African Americans and Hispanics were incarcerated at the same rates as whites, prison and jail populations would decline by almost 40%.<sup>25</sup> Criminal justice leaders and officials have the power to limit the amount of coronavirus deaths. Jails and prisons house very large numbers of people with chronic diseases which can lead to more COVID-19 related deaths. By releasing more people, with non-violent crimes, from jail, we can prevent overcrowding. Many inmates in state prisons have pre-existing medical conditions, with about 66% of prisoners and 40% of jail inmates, diagnosed with a chronic condition at the time of interview, reported taking prescription medication.<sup>12</sup> These prisoners have a higher risk of being diagnosed with COVID-19.

Today, Black Americans are incarcerated at more than 5 times the rate of White Americans. The imprisonment rate for African American women is twice that of White women.<sup>25</sup> Decriminalising certain drug policies and laws can help towards criminal justice reform as many Black Americans are incarcerated for petty marijuana crimes. The NAACP's One Million Jobs Campaign Leverage the NAACP's relationships with major corporations to secure one million jobs for people with criminal backgrounds throughout the United States beginning in Connecticut and create accountability and transparency around fair chance hiring goals and employment initiatives. With more support and funding, this campaign can help thousands of individuals who have been formerly incarcerated.

In Connecticut, the Department of Correction Commissioner granted discretionary release to 560 people in May. Since March 1st, the prison population has dropped by about 2,000 people (or 16%).<sup>4</sup> Although there was an increase in discretionary releases there were still racial disparities within the releases. White inmates accounted for 199 of the 522 discretionary releases in March 2020. That's notable because white people make up less than 30% of the total incarcerated population. Black people accounted for 37% of discretionary releases, despite making up around 43% of those in custody. Almost 24% of those released under the DOC's discretion were Hispanic. They make up around 27% of the total prison population.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, Rabbi Greer was released from prison due to dangers of contracting COVID-19 behind bars. Greer was found guilty of raping and sexually assaulting one of his male students in 2017. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2019. This is Greer's first year in prison and due to his chronic asthma, a Superior Court Judge has ordered Greer to be temporarily moved to house arrest.<sup>48</sup> This is a luxury many black and brown inmates will never have, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

After finishing a sentence, individuals need to find a place to live and get a job, which can be very hard with a stain on your record. Many jails are considering major policy changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but are hesitant due to the lack of resources.

Arizona and Minnesota prison officials waived copays charged to inmates for medical visits and waived fees for personal hygiene supplies. Inmates are often homeless, dealing with mental illness or substance abuse. Local jails and prisons are not providing the medical and social services inmates need to stay out of jail. A criminal record can reduce the likelihood of a callback or job offer by nearly 50 percent. The negative impact of a criminal record is twice as large for African American applicants.<sup>5</sup> One of our main priorities is to keep pushing for the “Clean Slate” Bill along with many state leaders, clergy members, criminal justice advocates, and formerly incarcerated individuals. This bill will help many individuals with criminal records get their lives back. Prioritizing rehabilitation of offenders, especially juvenile offenders can have a positive impact on the mental health of former inmates as they return to society and their families. Not only will this bill help current inmates but will have a positive impact on our economy. Senator Gary Winfield, a New Haven Democrat who co-chairs the Judiciary Committee and a primary sponsor of the bill, said “a criminal record should not be a life sentence to unemployment, underemployment, and poverty.” In the wake of COVID-19, the support for criminal justice is critical and necessary for those individuals that are already disadvantaged.

In response to the death of George Floyd, numerous protesters and activists have called for officials to ‘defund the police’ but Connecticut lawmakers prefer a massive reform bill.<sup>12</sup> Rep. Jahana Hayes, D-5th District, calls for the Justice in Policing Act as “a first step to addressing the decades old grievances being articulated.” Hayes is married to a Waterbury Police Officer and ensures the point of this Act is not anti-police, but rather a proposed solution to police misconduct. Drafted by the Congressional Black Caucus, of which Hayes is a member, and co-sponsored by most House and Senate Democrats, the package of reforms would make it easier to prosecute police officers who wrongly harm or kill someone, as well as those who are charged with other forms of misconduct. The bill would also ban “no-knock” warrants in federal drug cases and condition federal funding for state and local law enforcement agencies on prohibiting the use of those warrants as well. It would also ban federal police from using choke techniques like the one then-Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin used on Floyd.

In order to limit social injustices, the State of Connecticut should require all officers to undergo de-escalating training to ensure the safety of citizens. De-escalation training will teach officers to slow down, create space, and use communication techniques to defuse






potentially dangerous situations.<sup>15</sup> It will give police officers strategies to calmly and accurately deal with people who are experiencing mental and emotional crises. Requiring police officers to undergo Community Engagement Training every six months could significantly improve officer and civilian relations.

Many local departments here in Connecticut still don't have body cameras for officers, despite the state offering financial help through grants. Accountability is nearly impossible without transparency, and too often police are able to block public access to information.<sup>17</sup> This information should be accessible to the public so that officers with multiple citizens complaints can be disciplined. Many officers should receive Cultural Competence Training when interacting within urban communities and individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. According to the most Census data, New Haven was the most diverse city in the state of CT, with 31.5 percent of the residents identifying as Black American, 30.5 percent of New Haven's residents are White and 4.7 percent identify as Asian.<sup>27</sup> Training police on how to deal with minority, LGBTQ, and other communities would have a positive effect on police-civilian interactions. Many officers have multiple citizens complaints and are still working without any consequences. This is impacting black and brown communities.

Addressing the *"Blue Wall of Silence"* is necessary because every police force has one. Bad cops need to be held accountable when engaging in bad, irresponsible or discriminatory behavior, while the good cops are watching and staying silent. At the state and local level, bad cops should be held accountable for police misconduct. Criminal justice cannot improve if we do not address this issue. We need Connecticut officials to commit to addressing the blue wall of silence that exists among CT Police Forces. Reviewing Police Department policies and procedures is crucial during this time of racial injustice.

We believe change is possible for criminal justice reform in Connecticut by working diligently with civil rights leaders and government officials, lower urban communities can receive the resources they need. Adjusting our police forces with training and accountability, residents will feel more comfortable when dealing with law enforcement are just stepping stones. Criminal justice reform can not and will not happen overnight which is why we need to work together.





## ***Speaking with the ACLU, these are some ways to reform criminal justice in CT:***

- Create Meaningful Accountability for Police through policies that immediately reduce harm to Black and Latinx people and communities
- Create early warning systems for problematic departments by requiring transparency from police and require meaningful feedback by the community.
- Policy solutions include data tracking/reporting by police and statewide centralized complaints o Implement external oversight of police departments at the state and local level for both routine policing and specific misconduct events.
- Oversight mechanisms include a statewide office to investigate departmental pattern-or-practice of wrongdoing, independent professional licensing of police employees, local independent civilian review boards, and public reporting of deaths resulting from police interactions
- Establish consequences for departmental and individual police wrongdoing by imposing new deterrents and correcting flaws in existing policies.
- Possible options include statewide independent prosecution and investigation of police violence, pension clawbacks for bad police and fiscal clawbacks for bad departments, prohibiting police unions from limiting accountability in contracts, and banning qualified immunity.
- Defund Police for Safer Communities through long-term strategies to create real safety and health by shrinking police presence and ultimately tapering off the need for police.
- Constrict the responsibility of police so that fewer matters fall into their purview.

# EDUCATION

As we face the COVID-19 pandemic, disparities in public education become crystal clear. Historically, black and brown communities have received less funding towards education and educational programs. Millions of students at colleges and universities across the country are facing an unprecedented moment of financial and educational uncertainty as campuses move online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. School systems in low-income areas lack resources and have an undeniable impact on black and brown students. In recent decades, Black men who dropped out of high school have been 11 times more likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime than black men who attended at least one year of college.<sup>13</sup> Raising the graduation rate of males by just five percent would save the United States over five billion dollars in crime-related cost alone.<sup>14</sup> Developing pathway programs to college could make a huge difference.

One notable study, A Three-way Error Components Analysis of Educational Productivity conducted by Dan D. Goldhaber, Dominic J. Brewer & Deborah J. Anderson, found that the influence of family and neighborhood factors accounts for roughly 60 percent of the variance in student test scores. Roughly two-thirds of suburban kids are white with parents who obtain college degrees.<sup>28</sup> Our school systems should be diverse and unique, especially with students from lower-income and urban neighborhoods. Schools are fundamental to student development and well-being and provide them with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech, mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. Beyond supporting the educational development of students, schools play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity.<sup>26</sup> Minority Teacher Recruitment is one of our top priorities in improving education throughout urban communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and long after. Data from 2015 shows that students of color accounted for over 40% of Connecticut's public school students, with only 8% of the state's teachers and about 2% of the administrators in Connecticut's public schools are people of color.

Urban educators report the growing challenges of educating urban youth who are increasingly presenting problems such as poverty, limited English proficiency, family instability, and poor health.<sup>28</sup> The State of Connecticut Board of Education should start working diligently to improve the Minority Teacher Recruiting Program by hiring more African American, Latino American, Native American and Asian American teachers. Recruiting more diverse faculty in urban, rural and suburban communities is important.

Many students in Connecticut will never have the opportunity to engage with a teacher of color. Minority students often perform better on standardized tests, have improved attendance, and are suspended less frequently (which may suggest either different degrees of behavior or different treatment, or both) when they have at least one same-race teacher.<sup>29</sup> The state of Connecticut needs to commit to the recruitment of more diverse faculty within educational positions from secondary to the collegiate levels.



Another circumstantial issue is access to technology and resources, many students coming from urban communities do not have it. Students were forced to transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many need high-speed internet to effectively engage in online learning. Adopting policies to reduce deployment costs can help lower income communities access high-speed internet, leveraging public data can also positively impact the disconnect in broadband availability. According to the Pew Research Center, many parents with lower incomes say it's likely their child will face digital obstacles when trying to do schoolwork at home during the outbreak. Based on this, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey among parents with children whose schools were closed. The study concluded that 33 percent of students in urban communities were 'not able to complete their school work because they do not have access to a computer at home compared to 12 percent of students located in suburban communities.<sup>30</sup> Another alarming statistic is 36 percent of lower income students were not able to complete their schoolwork because they do not have access to a computer at home compared to only 4 percent upper income students.<sup>30</sup> Making feasible steps to improve accessibility is a first step to creating a better learning environment for lower income and urban communities.

Student engagement is something that we often forget about, right now with distance learning it should be a top priority. The sudden and unprecedented halt in in-person classes may have left students disoriented and unmotivated. One upside, teachers can get creative by implementing a mix of content and activities. Teachers should establish regular check-ins with students and implement frequent interactive activities to keep students engaged.

Check ins can easily be a great way to implement Social and Emotional learning (SEL). According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL is defined as "How children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, set goals, show empathy for others, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."<sup>31</sup> Within CASEL's framework there are five major competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. During a normal school year it is normal for students to be stressed in some incidents, the pandemic only amplifies this stress. Requiring teachers to engage in Culturally Responsive SEL programs is important and can help students focus on academics. Through Culturally Responsive SEL, students can work with their professors to address culturally relevant topics, example implicit biases, and acknowledge the different cultural lenses that may exist in the classroom and beyond. This practice should be implemented beyond the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure students are culturally competent. Social and emotional intelligence is most effective when integrated into core learning activities: teaching students to work in teams, to effectively communicate their opinions, and to actively listen to peers.<sup>31</sup>

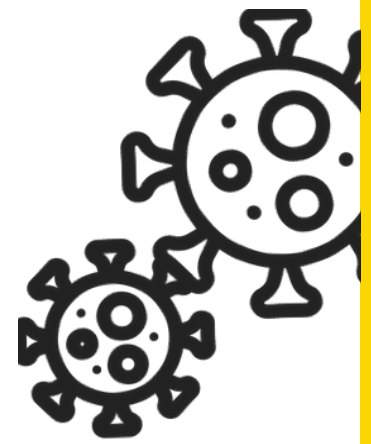
As the pandemic continues, students are missing out on meals. Schools across the nation are still offering lunch pick ups at certain locations. The biggest hurdle within

education in urban communities is the lack of funding. Funding does make a difference. It determines whether there will be 15 students in a class or 25. It determines whether the students will have computers or old textbooks, even how many AP classes will be offered. In New haven, schools need funding, Darnell Goldson, President of the New Haven Board of Education says its due to the state government being OK with funding the prison–industrial complex at \$56,140 per prisoner while funding schools at \$11,525 per student.<sup>37</sup> Moving forward, lawmakers should allocate more funding into education throughout urban communities and defund the police. Supports any request of the Connecticut State Department of Education or, the Office of Early Childhood to the Governor and General Assembly for additional funding to maximize out-of-school education for preschool through grade 12 students. Any request should acknowledge and target adequate funding for schools serving children of color from economically disadvantaged families. The impact of the COVID-19 virus on the education of students of color in Connecticut will have lasting effects that are likely to affect their life's prospects. The uncertain duration of the virus causes the NAACP to redouble its concern for the education of students of color in a triaged environment, dependent upon under-resourced school districts to effectively manage a life-threatening crisis, in addition to its constitutional charge. Whereas the Connecticut NAACP supports actions of the state to institute systems that engage students in an academic process, it is generally accepted that these improvised systems and unproven methods will cause students of color attending under-resourced and under-performing schools to fall even further behind their privileged, affluent, and largely White counterparts.

To this effect, the Connecticut NAACP offers these recommendations in advance of a more complete document detailing the impact of COVID-19 and its effects on people of color and the communities in which they live.

The Connecticut NAACP asserts that access to a traditionally organized local schooling system offers the best prospect for supporting education for all students. The NAACP supports the requirement of the Commissioner of Education to create in all public schools conditions that inhibit the presence and spread of the virus as a condition for regular school reopening. This general recommendation includes creating and assuring local schools and childcare programs are safe and that each has the capacity and understands its obligation to maintain and sustain safety, practice deterrent hygiene and, meet the most current scientifically informed standards and practices that inhibit the spread of COVID. Protocols governing traditional school opening in Connecticut must be developed by the SDE, in collaboration with state health authorities. When and if it becomes evident that safety conditions in schools, sufficient to deter the spread of COVID cannot be sustained, the CT. NAACP supports closing schools and employing alternative methods until conditions of general safety returns.

Insists that all state and federally I.D.E.A. entitled services to students with disabilities be fully delivered in accordance with a current IEP or other official plan governing service delivery.



***The Connecticut NAACP, therefore, generally supports the Commissioner of Education's plan to reopen school in a COVID environment. Further, the Connecticut NAACP:***

- Supports any request of the Connecticut State Department of Education or, the Office of Early Childhood to the Governor and General Assembly, to fund supplemental education engagement, including summer school, extended school day, extended school calendar, after school enrichment, tutorials and technological home-based supports.
- Supports any requests of the Connecticut State Department of Education or, the Office of Early Childhood to provide each school, community, family and student with the infrastructure, hardware, software and instruction necessary to sustain high quality home-based, media supported instruction.
- Encourages that adults in families be provided necessary instruction in technology use, curriculum content understanding, instructional pedagogy, and human development necessary to support and guide home-based instruction.
- Encourages that professional educators' responsibility include support to adult family members in executing home-based instruction.
- Encourages that consideration for all aspects of the general curriculum be available to students during the crisis and requiring home-based instructional support.
- Encourage that any funding and support that enables education during the current COVID-19 crisis be available to all public schools, non-profit schools and parochial schools serving students from economically disadvantaged families.



# VOTING

Now, more than ever voting is crucial and so is filling out the census. The census ensures that every individual is accounted for and can help communities receive government funding. Connecticut has strict laws in order for individuals to be eligible for absentee voting, expectations have been made due to the COVID-19.

Unfortunately, not enough attention has been given to how the pandemic changes the way we vote. Nov. 3, 2020 will be election day for all 50 states in America. Voter Suppression is still occurring in many black and brown communities all over the United States. According to Andrea Young, the executive director of the Georgia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), said poll closings often target so-called super voters, who consistently vote and depend on routine and comfort in the voting process.<sup>37</sup>

The number of polling places in a county can have a significant impact on who votes especially in big electoral states. And changing the location of a polling place, according to a 2011 study in the American Political Science Review, can lower voter turnout. “What we think of as the Black vote is a product of a racially defined interest-group politics that emerged as the consolidation of the victorious social movement of the 1960s. In that interest group people’s interests can be reduced to what elites have defined as ‘Black people’s concerns.’

But Black people are concerned about a lot of things, not just race but women’s issues, sexual identity, union politics, etc. But then there are arguments about political campaigns as not being ‘Black specific.’ said Professor Emeritus of Political science in the School of Arts & Sciences, Adolph Reed. It is a priority that all individuals no matter what neighborhood they reside in, should have no problems voting. Changing a polling location to an unfamiliar environment, said Marc Meredith, an associate professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, can be an effective tool of voter manipulation.<sup>41</sup>

We purpose an statewide awareness campaign which will strive to educate the importance of voting, completing the census, where to vote, how to register, deadlines and absentee ballot information. Along with an awareness campaign focusing on black and brown communities, implementing an outreach campaign can be highly effective. With social distancing orders, door to door practices are unsafe, holding community meetings, maintaining social distance or virtual events can be a great way to get the message across. Mobile SMS is a great tool to reach younger audiences who have just met the age requirement to vote, along with millennials and Gen Z voters.



In the 2006 election, voters getting text reminders voted at a rate 3.1 percentage points higher than those who did not. These SMS were primarily bulk texts that reminded supporters to register their support.<sup>40</sup> Although there are many resources, many individuals are unaware of this information especially due to the pandemic.

Informational programs or events that follow social distancing guidelines that allow for students and people of the community to register to vote. Along with pushing more residents to vote in upcoming elections, we must require personal protection equipment for poll workers across the state. Poll workers will be considered essential and can potentially be putting their lives at risk. Ensuring proper PPE will ensure their safety and prevent the spread of COVID-19 during voting.

A major priority is to ensure that when it's time to vote, black and brown individuals are able to, machines should be up and running in these communities. No one should have to risk their health in order to vote. Our first priority is to secure the polling places, said Secretary of State Denise Merrill on Connecticut's Public Radio's Where We Live. Connecticut has already taken steps to improve voting by committing to sending absentee ballot applications to every registered voter. We are pushing for the statute to change and be more inclusive to members of the community who cannot vote under state requirements.

We call on the Governor's office to develop an awareness campaign dedicated to voting and the 2020 Census. Addressing voter suppression tactics and dismantling them is the first step, educating the youth and adults on the importance of voting is crucial for improvement. Implementing methods to measure responses rates can be beneficial for future elections. This year we must make sure that our black and brown community members use their right to vote if eligible. We must also continue to push for families to fill out the 2020 Census. The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has had and will continue to have an impact on elections in the State of Connecticut.

The State of Connecticut has strict laws regarding who can vote by absentee ballot. Gov. Lamont executive order 7QQ on May 20, 2020 only applies for ballots cast for the August 11, 2020 primary election. The number of polling places due to the social distancing requirements and personal protective equipment needs for each polling facility may be changed or reduced thus resulting in voter suppression. In addition, poll workers must be considered essential and may potentially be putting their lives at risk. Ensuring proper Personal Protective Equipment will ensure their safety and prevent the spread of COVID-19 during voting. The Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches proposes the following recommendations for the Connecticut General Assembly 2020 Special Session.

The Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches recommends the Connecticut General Assembly including the COVID-19 virus as a lawful choice by qualified voters of the state to vote by absentee ballot on November 3, 2020. Protocols governing Personal Protective Equipment for polling facilities and poll workers must be developed by the Secretary of State's Office in collaboration with state health authorities and municipalities.


- Support the General Assembly passage of legislation to permit a person to lawfully state he or she is unable to appear at a polling place because of COVID-19 virus if, at the time he or she applies for or casts an absentee ballot for the November 3, 2020 general election.
- Support the additional funding necessary for the Office of the Secretary of State to mail the request for Absentee Ballots to all registered voters in the State of Connecticut.
- Supports additional funding for the Office of the Secretary of State to create and promote a statewide outreach awareness campaign focusing on black and brown communities, which will strive to educate the importance of voting, how to register and where to vote including deadlines and absentee ballot information. This outreach awareness campaign should include social media, text messaging and other digital media in addition to the current media outlets.
- Supports the request that additional funding be made available to municipalities to ensure all polling locations and poll workers receive the Personal Protective Equipment in order to minimize the spread of COVID-19 for both the August 11th primary election and the November 3rd general election.





***Black voters in swing states **worry more than other groups about the health and economic crises created by the coronavirus pandemic,** according to a new CNBC/Change Research poll.***

*Source: CNBC/Change Research survey*



***The State of Connecticut NAACP Branches call on Governor Ned Lamont to lead the way ensuring Connecticut can act as a blueprint for urban areas in other states. Starting by addressing the challenges such as those documented in this report. Our CT COVID-19 Action Plan provides numerous approaches, recommendations and crucial facts in hopes to minimize the racial disparities existing in Connecticut's urban communities and protect black and brown lives.***

***The following report has been conducted on behalf of the State of Connecticut NAACP Branches. With help from the Connecticut Black & Puerto Rican Caucus, and various community members, we were able to hear the needs, wants and concerns of black and brown individuals in CT. This action plan strives to suggest practical ways to improve urban communities with the State of Connecticut to ensure equality. Addressing the problems and implementing changes can allow us to serve as a blueprint for other states looking to tackle the racial disparities that have always existed but have been amplified by COVID-19. We plan to be the change we want to see.***

*“Most ‘essential’ employees are those who are front-line, low-wage workers,” said Wizdom Powell, director of the Health Disparities Institute at UConn Health. “And across our nation, we see that unfortunately a large percentage of **people of color** are concentrated in those positions, so they don’t have options to shelter-in-place. They have to put themselves on the front line to interact with people who are potentially carrying COVID-19.”*




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