



Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

Department of Human Rights
Lucas State Office Building—2nd Floor
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Kim Reynolds, Governor
Adam Gregg, Lt. Governor
San Wong, Director

May 19, 2020

Honorable Kim Reynolds
Governor of Iowa
Iowa State Capitol
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Ref: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response, Observational Concerns and Recommendations

Dear Governor Reynolds:

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has created an unprecedented level of fear and/or life-threatening security threat while paralyzing human interactions and businesses/economies across the globe; subsequently, creating one of the biggest challenges to leaders across the world in terms of how effective to response to this faceless, colorless, odorless, race-less, gender-less, and age-less deadly virus.

As governments, including the state of Iowa, move to slowly ease the lockdown and recommend the re-opening of businesses, limited or unlimited, the Commission understands that it may be one of the most difficult decisions any leader will have to make, especially, when statistical reports from multiple sources indicate increase in cases and fatalities, particularly with respect to certain vulnerable population, seem very alarming.

Indeed, like in most disasters, natural or man-made, some groups usually get hit the hardest. Consequently, in this deadly pandemic, trends of reported statistical data from multiple sources seem to show that the Black Community is the hardest hit, proportionately, in terms of cases and fatalities. One of the external factors identified as the culprit in the disproportionate casualties experienced by the Black population can be attributed to established businesses where a certain population of the Black community works, such as the Meat Packing Factories, Nursing/Group Homes, etc., which, due to the nature and set-up of the businesses, tend to create situations where interactive contacts are usually at high densities. For instance, during a teleconference call with leaders of the various African communities last week, there was testimony from individuals from the communities working in those establishments that were reportedly tested positive for the COVID-19; who were being asked to return to work after two weeks of quarantine, without having received any medicinal treatment, and after having being denied a post-test by the relevant healthcare personnel to determine recovery from the virus. One of the individuals testifying stated that she's a cancer patient; that almost all of the clients at the Group Home she works had tested positive for COVID-19, even as she's being asked to return to work.

While we understand that it's not the fault of the business communities when it comes to the set-up of the businesses, as well as the fact that COVID-19, in terms of its emergence, nature and manner, appears unanticipated, the Commission, however, appeals to the government of state of Iowa to do all it can in its authority-power to protect all Iowans, especially, again, the vulnerable population at those work environments and beyond (the Black Population/Africans and African-Americans), both in terms of safety-health and economic/food security.

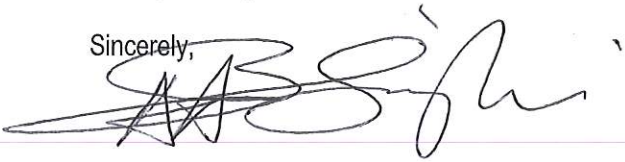
Consequently, with the knowledge and understanding that this deadly virus is airborne and [easily] transmissible from person to person; with the knowledge of statistical data from various sources that indicate the Black Population being the hardest hit, proportionately, by the deadly virus (COVID-19), in terms of cases, as well as fatalities [complicated by pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart-disease, stroke, etc. experienced by the population], the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans (ICSAA), as a representative of the Black Community (Africans and African-Americans), expresses great reservation on the government's decision to ease the lockdown and slowly re-open businesses without the proper protective-preventive mechanism (VACCINE) in place to guarantee the safety of the public from contracting the deadly virus, and the Medication in place for the treatment to guarantee the recovery (CURE) of those found to have tested positive for the deadly virus. Thus, the Commission (ICSAA), with contributing testimonial inputs from the African Community represented by Africans In Iowa For Empowerment (AIFE), as we work to balance the economic needs and health/life needs of the society, while striving to greatly minimize casualties, strongly recommends the followings:

1. That the Government engages diligently and aggressively with the scientific community by providing this community with the necessary resources to speed up the creation and production of the needed vaccine for immunization as protective-preventive measure necessary to minimize the individuals' propensity to contract the virus and protect against devastating effect of the virus if contracted with it; while providing the citizens a sense of safety and comfort to slowly interact again. This is deemed necessary in that the current protective measures such as, social distancing and mask-wearing rules, seem hardly effective given that the rules seem hardly followed/obeyed by a large number of the population; thereby making it easier to spread the virus and put the population at risk.
2. That the Government engages diligently and aggressively with the scientific community by providing this community with the necessary resources to speed up the creation and production of the treatment medication for COVID-19 so that individuals tested positive for the virus receive the treatment they need to recover from the deadly virus. And, that those treated for the virus are post-tested (after-treatment test/diagnosis) to ascertain recovery so that the public is safe from the potential spread of the virus; that those that need to return to work are so certified by the relevant medical/healthcare personnel.
3. That the Government diligently works with the business communities in consultation with the Commission (ICSAA) to continue with the necessary steps to effectively protect the workers from contracting and/or spreading the deadly virus by periodically reviewing the policies and the implementations of the policies to ascertain the safety and health of the workers and the business owners.
4. That the Government works with the business communities, as well as independently [where necessary the government takes the responsibility of providing financial assistance], to protect the Iowa workers, especially, the vulnerable population, from economic disadvantages and/or undue financial burdens where they have legitimate fear of returning and/or going to work due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

5. That the government works closely with the Commission to help manage the fear of the population through providing updates by the government/Governor's Office to the Commission at reasonable frequency on the progresses of the above delineated recommendations.
6. Finally, that the Governor provides a platform and time for a teleconference with the Commission to further discuss these important concerns raised and the related recommendations at the earliest convenience so the Commission will be able to provide response/feedback to the community, accordingly.

Thank you. Stay Safe!

Sincerely,



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Members of the Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans (ICSAA)