



August 17, 2020

Honorable Mayor and San Jose City Council  
200 E. Santa Clara Street, 18th Flr  
San Jose, CA 95113

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

In May 2020, leaders in Santa Clara County created a task force to address health disparities generated and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Health and Racial Equity Task Force, led by City of San Jose Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco and State Assemblymember Kansen Chu, convenes over a dozen community members, nonprofit health care leaders, labor representatives and elected officials to advance strategies that promote health and racial equity through the local COVID-19 response.

Our task force is divided into four issue-based subcommittees:

- Testing and Contact Tracing
- Community Engagement and Outreach
- Worker and Neighborhood Community Safety
- Resident Health and Well-being

Over the last few months, we have met weekly, held a public community hearing with over 125 participants, and hosted presentations by numerous representatives from the County Board of Supervisors, County of Santa Clara Public Health Department, and County and City of San Jose Emergency Operations Centers. Our goal is to better understand the current health crisis and address the disparate impacts of COVID-19 by race, particularly in hot zone neighborhoods in East San Jose and South Santa Clara County, where we have seen a disproportionate impact on low income communities of color.

Our collective experience, guided by research and community outreach, has led us toward a set of policy recommendations and implementation strategies we believe will promote health and racial equity locally. We are pleased to share those recommendations with you.

### **Testing and Contact Tracing**

Subcommittee Objectives:

- Free, easily accessible testing until vaccinations are widespread
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) and related support for community health centers
- Culturally appropriate contact tracing

- Multilingual messaging and proactive outreach to tested residents

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Ensure adequate access to testing for priority communities most impacted by COVID-19 and sufficient PPE and testing supplies to support testing entities, including community health centers.
2. Work closely with the community health centers in accessing affordable laboratory services for speedy and timely Covid19 specimen processing results.
3. Create a system of communication with patients that is clear, consistent, and actionable to increase patient compliance and participation with contact tracing and treatment, including:
  - a. Adopting a consistent and recognizable caller ID for all contact tracers
  - b. Providing clear explanations of the process for testing and tracing
  - c. Providing options for people who don't have access to technology
4. Continue and expand reporting on the [Santa Clara County COVID-19 Dashboard](#) to reflect data associated with those communities most impacted by COVID-19.
5. Establish clear, consistent and actionable messaging across health systems, both public and private, regarding testing protocols and access to tests for asymptomatic people .

**Community Engagement and Outreach**

Subcommittee Objectives:

- Participation by communities of color at COVID-19 decision-making tables
- Proactive community outreach
- Engaging trusted spokespersons from local CBOs, nonprofits, cultural centers, and community leaders

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Continue current multi-language outreach and communication efforts focused on a culturally relevant response.
2. Include members from our task force in the County's planning and decision-making process to strengthen outreach in hot zone communities.
3. Conduct regular County/City joint meetings, including members from our task force, regarding community outreach and engagement, and related efforts in order to maximize resources and expand effectiveness in hot zone neighborhoods.
4. Recruit and train trusted language specific spokespersons for targeted ethnic groups, beyond governmental officials, to serve as messengers on the importance of testing, risk reduction, transmission, resources for those that test positive, options for quarantine, etc.
  - a. Draw upon promotoras, faith institutions, parent groups, teachers, sports figures, little league coaches, behavioral health and supportive services nonprofits, and community and neighborhood leadership –we acknowledge Supervisor Cortese's recent request to fund greater outreach and support it.



- distancing, cleaning and PPE requirements under the public health orders at work sites, educating workers on their rights and available assistance.
4. Leverage existing non-profit partnerships in neighborhoods hit hardest by COVID-19 to help distribute PPE and cleaning supplies to the houseless, at-risk families and small businesses.
  5. Support Assemblymember Kalra's AB 3216 to expand emergency paid sick days, to strengthen State family leave policies for parents caring for children whose school or childcare facilities shutdown, and to ensure a right of recall for workers in sectors with highest rates of layoffs: building services, hotels, and events.
  6. Require businesses to provide PPE on-site for all employees, at no charge to workers or to reimburse for workers' PPE purchases, including misclassified workers such as gig company delivery workers. The county should consider opportunities to buy PPE to facilitate distribution/sale to small businesses.
  7. Develop a County standard on outbreaks at worksites, including public reporting and targeted response, such as access to a case-manager, coordinating free testing and site specific controls. Look at the example of [LA County](#), for reference.
  8. Develop zero tolerance policies for violence or threats from the public directed towards employees enforcing mask and other safety protections and for employer threats, retaliation or terminations of employees because of actual or perceived COVID-19 exposure.
  9. Advocate for CalOSHA to create an Emergency Temporary Standard to protect workers from COVID-19 hazards on the job.
  10. Explore emergency County policy for sectors with large numbers of at-risk workers with less rigorous contagious disease protocols, like hotels, building services and retail, like SF's recently adopted Healthy Buildings ordinance, to require cleaning and disinfecting "high-contact" areas multiple times per day, keeping logs of cleaning cycle, providing employees with protective gear, requiring informed consent on workers' risk, hazard pay standards, and prohibiting retaliation against workers who speak out about health risks.
  11. Increase access to quality subsidized childcare and early learning opportunities for low income working parents, and supporting economically impacted family and center based childcare providers as part of economic recovery efforts. The County should develop a plan for universal childcare and early learning in the long-term.
  12. Workers subject to COVID-19 related layoffs in highly impacted sectors, including hotels, airport hospitality, event centers and building services, must have a right to return to their original jobs when the need for layoff ends.
  13. Advocate to State delegation to end exclusions for undocumented workers in State safety-net programs like unemployment assistance.
  14. Extend eviction protections and rent relief, with programs to give money to tenants who are unable to access the Housing Prevention Programs:
    - a. Expand housing and homeless prevention funding to cover gaps in housing insecurity needs and increase benefit assistance services to expand enrollment in CalFresh, MediCal, Unemployment, SSI, CARES Act.
    - b. Extend the County and city Eviction Moratoria to permanently prohibit evictions for tenants who are unable to pay rent during the state of emergency due to loss of income

from COVID-19. This should include ensuring tenants unable to pay back rent on-time are not subject to eviction once the emergency ends. Additionally, the County should support AB 1436 to further protect tenants.

- c. Ensure tenants facing eviction have access to legal assistance. The County should consider developing a Housing Collaborative Court to create a new model for eviction court, where tenants can access free legal services, education on their rights, financial assistance, and access to mediators.
- d. Support federal, state and local efforts to expand rent relief and homeless prevention to help families pay-off rent debt and prevent mass evictions and homelessness.
- e. Design creative programs to give money to tenants rather than landlords where possible and necessary, for example, the City of San Jose has unprogrammed dollars that could be used for rent relief.

### **Resident Health and Well-being**

#### Subcommittee Objectives:

- Equitable access and funding for primary care and behavioral health
- Treatment for chronic conditions that may increase the severity of COVID-19 illness
- Food distribution and meal delivery
- Safe quarantine housing
- Basic health and safety supplies to assist residents at home

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Ensure equitable access and funding for primary care, behavioral health, and treatment for chronic conditions that may increase the severity of COVID-19 illness.
  - a. Expand options for telehealth to give residents easier access to services, including primary care, behavioral health, domestic violence, and other supportive services.
  - b. Expand options for telehealth, to give residents with chronic conditions the ability to stay home and seek care when possible.
  - c. Receive report from Santa Clara County regarding subsidized medication availability from Item 14 on the 1/28/2020 Board of Supervisors agenda. This is especially important for residents with diabetes who are at higher risk for COVID-19 complications.
  - d. Ensure that food distribution and meal delivery for at-risk populations is medically tailored by requiring the existence of a registered dietitian within the CBO(s) selected to provide these services.
2. Food distribution and meal delivery:
  - a. Fully fund food and meal programs that reach residents in hot zone neighborhoods for FY21 and FY22, including a meal delivery program that delivers dietitian-approved, culturally appropriate, healthy meals from local ethnic vendors to homebound residents.

- b. Invest in Universal School Meals - Whilst COVID-19 has increased the need across our County, it has also increased the number of schools that might qualify for Universal School Meals for the next four years. The City of San Jose and County of Santa Clara should act now to lock in federal funding to move our high-needs schools to universal meals programs.
        - c. Ensure that CBO reimbursement is no lower than the County's Senior Nutrition Program \$12 per meal rate and improve coordination efforts.
        - d. Receive a report from the City of San Jose about future plans for food distribution and meal delivery, and deliver recommendations that utilize existing CBOs to provide culturally competent meals.
        - e. Connect people to food distribution centers and CalFresh resources.
3. Work with state and local government partners to provide safe quarantine housing options for individuals and families impacted by COVID-19.
  - a. Provide hoteling to those that cannot isolate within their housing.
  - b. Provide a stipend to those with work that does not allow for sick time and cannot afford to self-isolate. For reference, Alameda County has set aside \$10 million for a similar program, which is expected to help 7,500 people with \$1,250 stipends.
  - c. Provide culturally appropriate food and care kits to those that cannot isolate within their own home.
  - d. Following the quarantine model utilized successfully by other countries, assign case managers (those hired within CBOs as part of the County's CHBET) to check-in on those quarantined outside of their home at least once per day.
4. Provide basic health and safety supplies to assist residents at home.
  - a. Receive a report on who is providing other non-food based essential items.
  - b. Expand free distribution of non-food based essential items.
    - i. Considering "period poverty," ensure that menstrual products are part of food distribution, meal delivery, and quarantine/isolation deliveries.
    - ii. Support distribution efforts for diapers, wipes, and formula.
    - iii. Provide toiletries, basic hygiene items such as shampoo, soap, shavers, shaving cream, toothpaste and toothbrushes as part of food distribution, meal delivery, and quarantine/isolation deliveries.

The task force welcomes ongoing partnership and dialogue with the County and the City of San Jose as we collectively develop additional ways to support the most vulnerable residents in our community.

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Health and Equity Taskforce Recommendations

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