



August 13, 2020

The Office of the Honorable John Lewis
The U.S. House of Representatives
300 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for H.R. 7546, the Minority Community Public Health Emergency Response Act.

The Office of Rep. John Lewis:

The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDS A) and the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) offer our strong support for H.R., 7546, the Minority Community Public Health Emergency Response Act (MCPHER). IDS A and HIVMA represent more than 12,000 infectious diseases and HIV physicians and other health care providers, public health practitioners and scientists who are at the frontline of the COVID-19 response. We are pleased that your legislation aims to help communities with high percentages of COVID-19 cases and deaths amongst historically underserved populations by preparing for COVID-19 outbreaks, as well as future public health emergencies.

While the pandemic has touched every community in our country, it has revealed the striking disparities in the U.S. that disproportionately impact Black/African Americans, Latinx, Native Americans and other underserved populations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Blacks/African Americans and Native Americans with COVID-19 are five times more likely to be hospitalized than white Americans, and Latinx populations are four times more likely to be hospitalized than whites.ⁱ Based on data from the 40 states reporting race and ethnicity data, the mortality rate for African Americans is 2.4 times as high as the rate for white Americans.ⁱⁱ Another analysis found that Latinx individuals are more than twice as likely to die than whites are.ⁱⁱⁱ In states where there is a large Native American population, they comprise a significantly higher proportion of the case count compared to the general population. In Arizona, Native Americans made up 18% of the deaths and 11% of the cases compared to 4% of the total population; 57% of the cases compared to 9% of the total population in New Mexico; and 30% of the cases compared to 2% of the total population in Wyoming.^{iv}

We greatly appreciate the intent of MCPHER to help underserved communities prepare for and respond to future pandemics. This legislation would: 1) authorize grant programs to help underserved communities plan for and respond to future infectious disease outbreaks, 2) require the establishment of a COVID-19 health services planning council that reflects the demographics of individuals with coronavirus in its community, with consideration given to disproportionately affected and historically underserved groups, and 3) improve access to care for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries by evaluating new social determinants of health payment models focusing on COVID-19, maternal mortality, behavioral health, and those who are both Medicare and Medicaid eligible.

We offer our strong support for the MCPHER Act to help ensure that historically marginalized and medically underserved communities have meaningful and immediate access to public health

interventions and medically necessary health care services during the COVID-19 pandemic. We can be contacted through Amanda Jezek, IDSA Senior Vice President for Public Policy and Government Relations at ajezek@idsociety.org, or Andrea Weddle, HIVMA Executive Director at aweddle@hivma.org.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. File, Jr., MD, MSc
Fellow of the IDSA
President, IDSA



Judith Feinberg, MD, FIDSA
Fellow of the IDSA
Chair, HIVMA

ⁱCenters for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

ⁱⁱAPM Research Lab. The Color of Coronavirus: Covid-19 Deaths By Race and Ethnicity in the U.S. Online at: <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>. Accessed June 8, 2020

ⁱⁱⁱGross CP, et al. Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Population Level Covid-19 Mortality. medRxiv. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.05.07.20094250>.

^{iv} Kaiser Family Foundation. [COVID-19 Presents Significant Risks for American Indian and Alaska Native People](#). May 14, 2020.