

**Rutland Area Branch**

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April 7, 2020

Dr. Mark Levine  
Department of Health  
108 Cherry Street  
Burlington, VT 05402

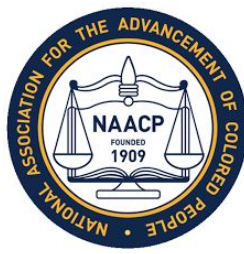
Dr. Levine:

We hope this letter finds you in good health and good spirits. We are Tabitha Moore and Steffen Gillom, the presidents of the Vermont Branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest non-partisan civil rights organization. We have led the fight for racial justice across the nation and supported equitable access and treatment for all races across all systems, including health care. We continue to do so now as we face the global pandemic that is COVID 19.

The Vermont Branches of the NAACP have been working locally to support and identify issues faced by Vermonters during the time of this COVID 19 pandemic. We have fielded complaints of racism, concerns of targeting, and we have helped people who need tangible resources and access to support.

As we navigate this terrain and learn how the illness is spreading, who it affects, where it is spreading and morbidity rates, we are, like so many Vermonters, worried. From the beginning we have been told to protect the most vulnerable among us, in particular the elderly and the young and those with compromised immune systems. Taking part in and observing the community responses to these directives has been uplifting. Stores have hours specifically for at-risk shoppers, neighbors are volunteering to run errands and accompany folks to appointments, people are making and wearing masks and going to great lengths to protect not just themselves but those most vulnerable among us. Statistics show that these efforts are working. But statistics are also showing something else.

As we learn that other states across the US are not only collecting but publicly releasing data related to racial demographics of those infected with COVID 19, we are learning that African American people are being disproportionately impacted by the illness. Not only are we infected at higher rates, we are **dying faster and more often than other races**. Morbidity rates across the US for all non-white



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people of color are alarmingly high, yet here in Vermont, we are not allowed to know just what those rates are or just what those statistics say. The excuse that the data pool is too small is an old one that we have heard in every one of Vermont's systems from education to policing. We say as we always have, Vermont will never overcome its systemic racism without multi-dimensional, data-driven efforts to reduce these disparities. That we should have to explain to a field of highly educated, brilliant medical professionals why data is important for the public to have is incomprehensible, but we will explain why our need for this information is critical if we must.

Our colleagues at Justice for All and the ACLU have already made it clear; we need to support people of color in Vermont. We need to dispel myths and work alongside our healthcare providers to ensure that we are doing all that we can to address COVID 19 in all aspects: medical, social, economic, legal and education. Without this data, we cannot accurately target our efforts or measure the effectiveness of race-specific interventions and supports. Therefore, the Vermont Branches of the NAACP respectfully request immediate release of racially disaggregated data related to COVID 19 from the Vermont Department of Health. We want to know who is being tested, treated, and hospitalized as well as who is recovering and who is dying. We want to know the demographic breakdown within our counties as well. As we said in the opening of this letter, we are fielding complaints of racism related to COVID 19. Having this data not only allows us to support people of color in accessing and receiving health care, it allows us to find and address trends in where and how racism is manifesting in this time of great fear. We can also support you better, too.

We must work together and we must work quickly. We thank you for your work and look forward to your release of this data that will help us do ours.

Respectfully,

Tabitha Moore  
President, Rutland Area Branch

Steffen Gillom  
President, Windham County Branch