

Policy Committee of the National Muslim COVID-19 Task Force



July 30, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-224
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Recommendations to Pass H.R. 6666: COVID-19 Testing, Reaching, And Contacting Everyone
(TRACE) Act

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority
Leader McCarthy:

We are writing in support of Representative Bobby Rush's push to pass H.R. 6666: COVID-19 Testing, Reaching, And Contacting Everyone (TRACE) Act. To effectively control the rate of infection, it is imperative that we accelerate our efforts to identify the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) followed by effective tracing and supported quarantine measures in the most vulnerable communities. There have been significant developments in the management of the pandemic, however, in order to effectively halt this crisis, more equitable access and care needs to be provided.

Data has shown that COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting minority populations, and this crisis has taught us about the interconnectedness of society, making it even more imperative to enact change. To get an overview of the dire situation for people of color, currently African Americans account for [one third of virus cases nationwide](#), despite making up just 13% of the U.S. population. In various states, including South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, African Americans account for more than half of COVID-19 fatalities, despite representing less than a third of each state's respective population. We also see similar trends for other racial or ethnic groups. In at least 10 states, Asian Americans have a case fatality rate that is [disproportionately higher](#) than the general population in 8 states.

Approximately 20% of the Muslim population identify as African American and about 10% as Asians. The ongoing crisis has highlighted pre-existing health disparities that have left communities of color at increased risk of health complications and mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Minority groups already experience higher rates of chronic health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, chronic kidney disease, and lung disease that increase the likelihood of mortality and morbidity from COVID-19.

Healthcare disparities in minority populations is closely intertwined with other socioeconomic challenges faced by racial and ethnic minorities. People of color are overrepresented in low income areas and therefore also have difficulties to access health insurance, transportation limitations and even job security which is tied to health insurance. Minority workers are also more likely to hold low-wage jobs on the front lines of this crisis placing them at a greater risk of contracting COVID with the ensuing complications due to the inequitable healthcare facilities in their communities.

The TRACE Act would establish a \$100 billion grant program run by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to award grants to eligible entities to conduct diagnostic testing for COVID-19 to trace and monitor the contacts of infected individuals, and to support the quarantine and isolation of such contacts. Funding could be used to support programs that develop mobile health units and test individuals and provide individuals who are quarantining or in isolation with services related to testing at their residences. Special preference would be given to grantees operating in hot spots and medically-underserved communities. Measures, including access to testing, contact tracing, and supported quarantine have been identified as strategic elements in controlling the coronavirus pandemic and in lifting social restrictions. This bill is, therefore, an important step towards a potential resolution, however, it does not enforce mandatory at-home testing or forcibly remove people for quarantine. Cellphones will also not be updated with 'COVID-19 traceability,' contrary to some public belief.

Overall, in this state of emergency, we need to rise to the occasion and institute the policies that are required in this crisis. For this reason we need to support and implement the elements of the **TRACE Act**, especially as it relates to testing, tracing, and treatment. We urge Congress to pass the bill as soon as possible as provisions to fund these measures for the most vulnerable people in our community.

Sincerely,

Policy Committee Of National Muslim Covid-19 Taskforce:

American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)

Islamic Medical Association of North American (IMANA)

Other Signatories:

American Muslim Community Foundation

American Medical Student Association

American Medical Women's Association

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)

Alianza

Board of Church and Society, Tennessee Conference, United Methodists Church

Campaign for Immigrant Detention Reform

Centene Corporation

Center for Health Equity, University of California, San Francisco

College of San Mateo Mana Program

Community Catalyst

Delaware Academy of Medicine and the Delaware Public Health Association

EverThrive Illinois

Friends of Residents in Long Term Care (NC)

Hawaii Korean-American Nurses Association

HealthxDesign

Institute for Healing Justice and Equity, Saint Louis University

Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)

MomsRising

Muslim Community Network

National Black Justice Coalition

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Alliance
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pacific Islander Community Association of WA
Pacific Islander Community Partnership
Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center (PCRC)
Poligon Education Fund
Potomac Physicians
Progressive Doctors
Sacramento Immigration Coalition
STEP UP Sacramento
Taulama for Tongans
University of Michigan