



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Brooklyn's Black Elected Officials Call on Governor, Mayor to Create Sweeping Revitalization Plan for Black Communities in Wake of COVID-19

ZELLNOR MYRIE April 22, 2020

BROOKLYN -- In a joint letter, 19 of Brooklyn's black elected officials are calling on Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio to implement a sweeping revitalization plan directed to the black communities who have suffered the most harm from COVID-19.

The proposed Elizabeth Jennings Graham Community Investment Plan (the "Lizzie Plan"), would seek to involve the black community in the public response to the crisis and include plans for data collection, testing, personal protective equipment, and more.

"Black people are dying at a higher rate than the rest of New York while making up the majority of frontline workers keeping the state afloat," the letter reads. "This disproportionate impact demands a commensurate response and is why we write today to demand that New York immediately convene a task force to specifically address the Emergency, Relief, Recovery, and Rebuilding needs of black New Yorkers in Central and South Brooklyn.

"Thus far, black voices have been excluded from the decision-making in response to COVID-19," the letter continues. "The convening of this task force, and subsequent adoption of the recommendations put forth by the Plan, seeks to rectify this injustice."

The scope of the proposed task force would include:

- Specific and granular data on infection rates, hospitalizations, and deaths in the black community;
- Provision of PPE for all essential workers, many of whom are black;
- All manners of testing in black communities, including the testing of essential workers, the availability of rapid testing, and additional testing sites;
- Relief for black owned businesses;
- Resources specifically dedicated to food distribution in the black community;
- Housing affordability and stability for renters, homeowners, and property owners;
- Accountability for nursing homes;
- Consumer protections against rate hikes, negative credit reporting, garnishment, and debt collection;
- Relief for immigrants who, thus far, have been left out of relief efforts;
- Reforms to the criminal legal system, including the release of justice-impacted individuals at increased risk of infection;
- Bridging the digital divide, particularly in the context of education;
- Emergency Census outreach given the historical undercounts in black communities compounded by the current crisis.

According to state data, black people have made up 18 percent of statewide deaths from COVID-19 and make up only 9 percent of the population. Analysis of national census data shows that black workers are more likely to serve in essential services such as retail and transportation than white workers, with 37.7% of black workers working in “essential”

services compared to 26.9% of white workers.

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