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As COVID-19 spreads and the public health emergency intensifies, equity arcata calls on local governments and institutional leaders to pay special attention to the impact that this disease and their response to its spread may have on people of color.

We call for an approach that provides accurate information and advances policies based on science. We call on decision-makers to act with compassion and provide comprehensive medical and social services for those most vulnerable to exposure. We are all only as safe as those members of our community who are most at risk.

Race Forward's statement on racialized disparities reminds us: "While we know that anyone can contract the virus, we also know that the impacts on communities of color could be severe. People of color are disproportionately likely to be in low-paying or hourly-wage jobs that make them unable to provide care or interrupt work. They are also more likely to have limited access to affordable healthcare, childcare, and transportation. People of color are more likely to face unsanitary conditions inside prisons, jails, and detention centers. Funding disparities in communities of color have led to hospital closures; shortages of frontline doctors and nurses; higher incidences of chronic conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease; housing overcrowding; and lack of quality elder care." In Humboldt County, we see this applies especially to our Native and immigrant residents.

Historically, government responses to urgent health concerns have been shaped by implicit and explicit bias. This public emergency has already harmed Chinese and Asian American community members through increased acts of bigotry and discrimination.

Emergency planning must consider that health inequities and racialized fears may exacerbate infection rates through the misallocation of time and resources, creating additional impacts and problems to solve.

equity arcata strongly urges all leaders and decision-makers to actively dispel myths and racist misinformation, and to collectively work to create a system-wide response needed to end the spread of this communicable disease. Local leaders must address the needs of the most marginalized populations in our community while stamping out stigma and blame. All of our health security is at stake.

Adapted from Race Forward Statement on the Coronavirus Emergency, Official Response and its Impacts on Communities of Color, www.raceforward.org

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