Wayne County Commission calls for equality in COVID-19 testing, treatment, prevention

Noting the extreme impact of COVID-19 on African Americans, the Wayne County Commission today unanimously called for a comprehensive effort to ensure all Americans have equal access to testing, treatment and prevention during the global pandemic.

“Michigan is 13 percent African American, but we have 40 percent of all deaths and that is true across the nation,” said Commission Chair Alisha Bell.

Sponsored by Chair Bell, the resolution “strongly encourages federal, state and local officials to allocate resources for testing, treatment, and prevention in a manner that ensures that an individual’s economic and social status does not determine the quality of health and medical resources.”

The resolution also calls on federal, state and local officials to maintain accurate demographic data related with COVID-19 to ensure resources are allocated to the most vulnerable individuals.

In addition, the resolution “implores medical professionals, hospitals, and local and state health departments to engage in a unified comprehensive effort to mitigate the racial and ethnic disparities caused by COVID-19.”
The resolution will be sent to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, the Michigan Congressional delegation, leaders in the Michigan House and Senate, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

“As we try to understand this virus and how to collect data, we must take the appropriate measures to ensure all individuals receive equal treatment in preserving their health and preventing any further spreading,” Chair Bell said.

RESOLUTION
By Commission Chair Bell

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan, the United States of America, and the entire world are experiencing an unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that is having a devastating impact on our society and way of life; and

WHEREAS, as of April 28, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in 3,083,000 confirmed cases and 212,500 deaths worldwide; 1,010,500 confirmed cases and 57,266 deaths in the United States; 39,262 confirmed cases and 3,567 deaths in Michigan; and 16,173 confirmed cases and 1,682 deaths in Wayne County; and

WHEREAS, data from state and local health departments reveal staggering racial and ethnic disparities in the number of confirmed cases and deaths associated with COVID-19 among African-American and Hispanic populations; and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) website, nationwide, Hispanics make up 24.5% of COVID-19 cases while only accounting for 18% of the population; and African-Americans make up 30% of COVID-19 cases while only accounting for 13% of the population; and

WHEREAS, in Michigan, African-Americans, the largest affected minority group, make up approximately 40% of COVID-19 deaths in the state while only accounting for approximately 14% of Michigan’s population; and

WHEREAS, according to the CDC’s website, individuals with underlying medical conditions are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, data collected by the CDC, as well as data from Central Health, a public organization that connects low-income and uninsured individuals to health care services, show
that the quality of health among minority groups is often due to economic and social conditions, such as living environments, lack of access to affordable health care, and work circumstances; and

WHEREAS, nationwide, the CDC reports that of the demographics collected on COVID-19 patients, approximately 50 to 60 percent failed to specify the race and/or ethnicity of the patient; and

WHEREAS, the failure to collect all demographic data, including race and ethnicity, could be contributed to the lack of technology and medical staffing issues such as: low staffing levels, inadequate training, and heavy workloads and hours, which result in information simply not being recorded; and

WHEREAS, without consistent and accurate data, federal and local resources for testing, treatment, and prevention may not be allocated to communities most affected by this pandemic; and

WHEREAS, federal and state officials should mandate standardized collection and reporting of COVID-19 data, including race and ethnicity, to provide a clear national picture of the disproportionate impact COVID-19 has on minority communities.

Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Wayne County Commission on this 30th day of April 2020 does hereby declare that it is of the utmost importance for federal, state and local officials to have complete and accurate demographic data related COVID-19 to ensure that resources are allocated to the most vulnerable individuals in our communities; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Wayne County Commission strongly encourages federal, state and local officials to allocate resources for testing, treatment, and prevention in a manner that ensures that an individual’s economic and social status does not determine the quality of health of and medical resources available to the individual; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Wayne County Commission implores medical professionals, hospitals, and local and state health departments to engage in a unified comprehensive effort to mitigate the racial and ethnic disparities caused by COVID-19 by implementing standardized processes, training and technology to assist with the collection and sharing of complete and accurate data including, but not limited to, data on age, race, ethnicity, and gender; and be it further
RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution be provided to Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer; Michigan Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist; Michigan Speaker of the House Lee Chatfield; Michigan House Minority Leader Christine Greig; Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey; Michigan Senate Minority Leader Jim Ananich; U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi; U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell; and the Michigan Congressional Delegation.