

March 5, 2020

Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith  
Chair, COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

RE: 2/26/2021 Biden-Harris COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force Meeting Regarding  
Data Needs to Close Health Inequities

Dear Dr. Nunez-Smith:

On behalf of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and the NHPCO Diversity Advisory Council, we thank you for your continued leadership in addressing health and social inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. NHPCO is the largest membership organization representing the entire spectrum of not-for-profit and for-profit hospice and palliative care programs and professionals in the United States. NHPCO is comprised of over 4,000 hospice locations with more than 57,000 hospice staff and volunteers, as well as 48 state hospice and palliative care organizations. The NHPCO Diversity Advisory Council provides information, guidance, and technical expertise related to serving diverse populations and achieving equitable access to hospice and palliative care services.

We greatly appreciate the public meetings that the Biden-Harris COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force is convening to promote transparency and ensure that stakeholder feedback is collected on these important issues. We attended the February 26, 2021 meeting, and in response to your call for comments, we submit the following recommendation:

While the disproportionate physical health toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color has been well documented, we have less information on the emotional health needs of these vulnerable communities.

***To help to ensure equitable access to social and emotional support, we recommend appropriate mental health screenings for communities impacted by COVID-19 to assess the emotional wellbeing of individuals who may be grieving the death and/or suffering of loved ones impacted directly by the coronavirus as well as connecting those in need to bereavement services. The Biden-Harris COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force should recommend that these screenings are offered broadly across the nation including at COVID-19***

***testing and vaccination sites. This systematic approach would support essential data collection efforts and help policymakers determine how to better target resources for services including bereavement and grief counseling.***

We thank you for your service and consideration of our recommendation. The hospice and palliative care community stands ready to assist you with screening, data collection, and grief and bereavement support as we work together to serve our most vulnerable and underserved communities during this national public health emergency and beyond.

Sincerely,



Edo Banach, President & CEO  
NHPCO



Nicole McCann-Davis, Chair  
NHPCO Diversity Advisory Council

cc: Cedric Richmond, Senior Advisor and Director of the Office of Public Engagement  
Christen Linke Young, Deputy Director of the Domestic Policy Council for Health and Veterans  
Zach Butterworth, Director of Private Sector Engagement  
Trey Baker, Senior Advisor for Public Engagement