

ANTONIO BROWN
COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 3

55 TRINITY AVENUE, SW SUITE 2900
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Phone: 404-330-6046
Email: AntonioBrown@atlantaga.gov



COMMITTEES:
Community Development/Human Services
Transportation
Committee on Council

CITY OF ATLANTA

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Brian P. Kemp
Governor, State of Georgia
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

The Honorable Keisha Lance Bottoms
Mayor, City of Atlanta
55 Trinity Ave SW
Suite 2500, City Hall
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

The Honorable Rob Pitts
Chairman, Fulton County Board of Commissioners
141 Pryor Street, SW
10th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

The Honorable Michael Thurmond
Chief Executive Officer, Dekalb County
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Dear Governor Kemp, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, Chairman Pitts, and CEO Thurmond,

Today, we write to shed light on our most vulnerable Georgians. As Congressman John Lewis has shown us, "Good trouble" requires each of us to use our voices to shed light where there is darkness. Low-income and Black and Brown communities are suffering now more than ever, and we must protect them. We must stand in the shadows and fight the good fight at all costs. We can no longer wait for the right time. The time is now.

In Georgia, African Americans – account for 33% of the state's population and are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. They account for 26% of the confirmed coronavirus cases and 52% of confirmed coronavirus deaths in Georgia. Whites in Georgia account for 15% of the coronavirus cases. Of the 18,489 total cases, 9,372 cases are racially unknown. According to the Georgia Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Kathleen Toomey, many local labs are not collecting the victim's race. Throughout the South and across the country, states and municipalities, that are reporting by race, have disclosed even more disturbing numbers adversely affecting black and brown communities. Before the Coronavirus pandemic, African Americans had higher rates of underlying chronic ailments like lupus, asthma, diabetes, sickle cell anemia, and heart disease that significantly reduce survival rates.

Low-income and Black and Brown communities are less likely to have access to health care and the resources to protect themselves against COVID-19. These communities are experiencing a shortage of testing. Currently, testing is occurring on the Georgia Institute of Technology campus; this is a promising start. However, because of the high volume of those seeking the test, many are left without appointments. We are in dire need of more testing sites, primarily located in low-income and Black and Brown communities. Equitable testing is paramount to reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Many Georgians are working remotely. However, according to the Economic Policy Institute, less than 1 in 5 African Americans can work remotely. Many work low wage jobs that are considered "essential." These Georgians are on the frontline. We need to expand testing opportunities in Georgia and accurately track case data to ensure we are meeting the needs of our most vulnerable Georgians. Recently, the United States Food and Drug Administration approved Cellex, Chembio, and Ortho Clinical Diagnostic's ability to market new COVID-19 antibody tests. We urge you to establish a coordinated State, County, and City response to aid Georgia's most vulnerable communities.

To protect our most vulnerable communities, we are requesting the following actions:

- Increase the number of COVID-19 testing locations in low-income and racial minority communities.
- Create broad testing opportunities for potential asymptomatic carriers and Georgians displaying mild symptoms.
- Establish COVID-19 testing sites for Georgia's unsheltered population.
- Collect and report accurate racial data on rates of infection and outcomes.

Your partnership is needed on these issues to protect Georgia's most vulnerable communities.

In-service,



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