



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 23, 2021

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Doctors and Advocates Call on Local Officials to Acknowledge YPLL Data, Increase Investments in Education, Mental Health, Employment, and Vaccines for Black and Latino Communities

New CDPH data show that Years of Potential Life Lost, an estimate of premature mortality, is far greater for Chicago's Black and Latino populations.

CHICAGO -- Leading medical experts and advocacy organizations including the Latino Policy Forum, Chicago Urban League, and Illinois Unidos are calling on intentional and strategic investments into mental health, employment training, education, and culturally competent health outreach for Black and Latino communities in light of new data from the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) that reflect a massive disparity in years of lost life.

CDPH data indicate that COVID-19 is responsible for 2,845.3 Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL) per 100,000 persons for the Latino population and 2,695.6 YPLL per 100,000 for the Black (non-Latino) population in the City of Chicago, compared to 797 for the city's Asian (non-Latino) population and 602.8 for its white (non-Latino) population.

"These data reflect both a devastating health disparity and a socio-economic shock to Black and Latino communities. The impact of these years of potential life lost will negatively impact the economic resilience of our communities," said **Dr. Melissa Simon, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Northwestern Medicine.**

"We are losing more than 5,000 years for every 100,000 Black and Latino persons in Chicago. Those are families who won't be celebrating Thanksgiving together," said **Sylvia Puente, President and CEO of the Latino Policy Forum.** "This is more than just a health crisis. We have seen devastating impacts in education, unemployment, and mental health. The K-12 declines we've seen for Latino students between spring of 2019 and 2021 are estimated to translate into a 2 percent decrease in projected lifetime earnings. This is not a one-time crisis. This all will reverberate for years to come."

“We’re also very concerned about homelessness, as well as the grief and pain that come with losing family members. Many Black and Latino children in Illinois have lost at least one primary or secondary caregiver,” Puente added. “We call on city, county, and state officials to invest ARPA dollars into mental health, education, and employment training and retraining. How will we make up for these losses?”

“People want data at an even more hyper-local level than zip codes. What are the census tracts or streets where we can really target our interventions?” said **Dr. Wayne Giles, Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago**. “We also need to realize, COVID is not the only epidemic facing our communities. We’re also having epidemics of addiction and poverty. We need to do a better job of articulating the simultaneous epidemics that are occurring in our communities. We need holistic solutions so we can address these multiple epidemics, because we want all our communities to thrive.”

“We reject the narrative that because mortality rates are low, COVID is over,” said **Dr. Marina Del Rios, Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at the University of Iowa**. “There’s a difference between surviving and thriving. ‘Long COVID’ has not only been reported in patients admitted to the ICU, but also in children and adults with milder disease. Breathlessness, fatigue, muscle weakness, anxiety, and depression can all affect activities of daily living. From a societal standpoint, we need to invest in research to study the long-term effects of COVID in those who are unable to return to their previous jobs, and in children who are now left with learning deficits or disability as they return to school. We call for equitable investment to design and implement culturally competent solutions. Surviving COVID is not the endpoint. We want to see our communities thrive.”

“COVID is impacting the ability of our community members to fully realize their greatest potential,” said **Karen Freeman-Wilson, President and CEO of the Chicago Urban League**. “When I listen to these statistics, it really sends a message that we have a lot of education to do. We have a whole culture to break through.”

Currently, vaccination completion rates for Black and Latino populations trail those of the white and Asian populations at both the state (44.7 percent Black, 49.8 percent Latino, 57.6 percent white, 71.5 percent Asian) and city (45.6 percent, 54.9 percent, 63.1 percent, and 66.7 percent, respectively) levels. The organizations presented these data and discussed implications at a virtual event on Monday morning, which can be viewed in full at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aD-hSJ83o8>

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