



Mississippi Center for Justice

For Immediate Release

April 2, 2020

Contact – Vangela M. Wade, President and CEO, vwade@mscenterforjustice.org

Mississippi Center for Justice Outlines Mississippi’s Necessary Response to Pandemic in Letter to Governor

Based on mathematical modeling, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that between 160 million and 215 million people in the U.S. could be infected over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. As many as 200,000 to 1.7 million people could die. As of yesterday, the Mississippi State Department of Health has reported a total of 1,177 cases and 26 deaths attributed to COVID-19. Given the limited availability of tests, actual viral prevalence is likely much higher. Unfortunately, due to preexisting health inequities, weak health care infrastructure, and high rates of uninsured individuals, Mississippians are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19-related deaths. Mississippians face the highest rates of heart disease and adult obesity in the nation—co-morbidities that increase the risk of COVID-19-related mortality. While COVID-19 will have long-lasting impacts on our state’s collective health, safety, stability, and economy, it will not affect all Mississippians equally. Already, the crisis is amplifying Mississippi’s staggering economic and racial inequities. Many of our most vulnerable residents and communities—many of whom already lack health insurance as well as adequate funds for groceries, rent, and other basic needs—do not have enough money in the bank to prepare for quarantine and widespread economic disruption.

When Congress enacted the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 (FFA) and CARES Act of 2020, it was clear that it expected states to use it. Accordingly, we have called on Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves and his administration to adopt the policy recommendations outlined in the letter linked below, which match the urgency of COVID-19’s threat to our state.

- [MCJ’s letter to Gov. Reeves detailing the necessary response to COVID-19](#)

The choices made in the days, weeks, and months ahead have the potential to minimize disease spread, deaths, and suffering among Mississippians. With thousands of lives on the line—especially including those whose health is already compromised, people who do not have health care, and people who are experiencing poverty—we urge the Reeves administration to adopt the policy recommendations above.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these recommendations, please contact Beth Orlansky, Mississippi Center for Justice Advocacy Director, at borlansky@mscenterforjustice.org or (601)214-4735.

With offices in Jackson, Biloxi, and Indianola, the Mississippi Center for Justice combats discrimination and poverty statewide through legal representation, policy advocacy, and community education. The Center partners with national, regional, and community organizations and volunteers to develop and implement campaigns that are creating better futures for low-wealth Mississippians and communities of color in the areas of educational opportunity; consumer protection; and access to health care, public benefits, and housing.