

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Boston, Lowell and Worcester, Massachusetts

The African Immigrant Communities of Massachusetts Launched

Massachusetts African Community Response to COVID19

For Immediate Action To Ensure More COVID-19 PPE Resources For Assisted Living and Home HealthCare African Workers

Today the African Immigrant Communities of Massachusetts called for immediate action to provide more COVID-19 PPE Resources for those undertaking care in Assisted Living and Home Healthcare settings. The African Immigrant Communities of Massachusetts are one of the largest immigrant communities in Massachusetts who contribute to the healthcare of Massachusetts' elderly.

Those Massachusetts seniors who are housebound or living in nursing homes have long been cared for and loved by the Massachusetts immigrant community. Notwithstanding today's enormous personal risk for COVID-19 infection, no care measure is off limits. Bathing, feeding and assisting seniors receiving their medication or even brushing their teeth are all part of the day-to-day and evening-to-evening care. The stress and physical toll of this work is substantial andjust part of the job.

At a recent virtual gathering of the African Communities of Massachusetts, members raised the alarm that notwithstanding their sacrifice and continued commitment to senior care, more and more of these committed healthcare workers are being exposed to possible infection as they are not provided the PPE necessary to keep them and their families safe.

Participants of a recent call for leaders of Africa community summed up their increased safety concerns expressed: "shortages in personal protective equipment, challenges to social distancing when taking public transportation and lack of access to their own medical care options, are a common worry. In some respects, the greatest fear we are hearing is not about the health of the individual worker but about the fear that he or she may inadvertently pass along the virus to a family member or to seniors who are unintentionally exposed."

Members of the African Communities of Massachusetts call upon local, state and federal officials to create immediate pathways of access to PPEs including N95 masks, gloves and testing equipment. Additionally, to the extent possible, they seek evaluations of the social distance challenges before further reducing available train and bus services.

"It is unfortunate that immigrant discussions are often missing in public debate. Hopefully, this crisis has indicated how essential these communities are and how they need government protection at all levels of society, especially during this crisis." Wilfred N. Mbah, Councilor, City of Somerville.

Mr. Emmanuel Owusu, Executive Director of African Bridge Network, offered a further comment: " We know everyone, but everyone is struggling with preventing this terrible disease, but inaction has consequences and those living paycheck- to- paycheck do not have the resources to combat this disease on their own."

“This unprecedented crisis will come to an end, but more importantly, let us end it with good note for the sake of humanity “ Gordon Halm, Director, African Community Center of Lowell.

List of Organizations/Individuals involved in this campaign

Name	Agencies
Gordon Halm	African Community Center of Lowell
Ken Asafo-Adjei	Ghana Association of Worcester
Wilfred Mbah	City of Somerville
Chioma Nnaji	Africans For Improved Access (AFIA) Program
Richard Andam	Ghana Association of Greater Boston
Rev. Joseph Asare	ICGC - Boston
Marlon Solomon	Afrimerican Culture Initiative Inc.
Kwame Bidi	African Community in Worcester
Jennifer Nakijoba	Worcester Division of Public Health
Mac Obiri-Mainoo	National Africa Online College
Jacqueline Ewuoso	Betsy Lehman Center
Jermoh Kamara	Liberia Association of Worcester
Angesom Teklu	Eritrean Community
Benjamin Kagigi	ACE Children
Dr. Abdifatah Ahmed	Community Caring Clinic
Lovo D. Koliego	Community Health Awareness Network
Peter Obour-Mensah	African Bridge Network
Tony Ansah	African Bridge Network
Jennifer Erem	African Bridge Network
Emmanuel Owusu	African Bridge Network

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