



For Immediate Release

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The National Black Leadership Commission on Health and Amida Care Call for Urgent Attention to Address COVID-19's Disproportionate Impact on Communities of Color

New York (April 10, 2020) –The **National Black Leadership Commission on Health (NBLCH)**, a nonprofit organization that promotes health and prevention of diseases within the Black community, together with **Amida Care**, New York's largest Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan are calling for urgent attention to address COVID-19's disproportionate impact on the Black community. Across the nation, early data is showing that African Americans are disproportionately contracting and dying from the coronavirus. In Louisiana and Chicago, approximately 70% of COVID-19 deaths occurred among African Americans, even though they are a minority in both areas. In New York State, Black people account for 18% of deaths but are 9% of the population.

Communities of color experience serious structural barriers to accessing quality, affordable health care, including discrimination and higher rates of poverty. This contributes to distrust in the system, which may lead many in the Black community to avoid seeking health care altogether. As a result, chronic health conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease are more widespread—conditions that place people at higher risk for COVID-19. This reflects the ongoing health disparities that communities of color face, such as the disproportionate impact of HIV.

“COVID-19 is amplifying the devastating impact of health disparities facing communities of color in our nation. It's unacceptable for some Americans to be more likely to get sick and die from the coronavirus than others because they can't get the care they need—care that should be readily available to everyone,” said Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care. “Let's stand together, stay strong, and do all we can to break down barriers and fight for health care access, social justice, and equity for communities of color.”

With the Easter and Passover holidays upon us, many may feel tempted to gather and worship with family and friends. The importance of continuing to practice social distancing cannot be overstated. Faith communities around the world have found creative and innovative ways to virtually worship together to keep everyone safe.

“Now more than ever given the current public health emergency, we all need to do our part to mitigate risks and keep our communities healthy. We are calling on everyone—community and faith leaders, teachers, caretakers, and all community members—to vigilantly promote and follow the guidance set

forth by public health experts,” said C. Virginia Fields, President and CEO of NBLCH. “It is a critically important time to pay attention to your health by diligently taking medicine to manage chronic conditions like HIV; staying on top of diabetes; managing high blood pressure; and reaching out for help if you need it.”

Advice from public health experts includes washing hands frequently, practicing social distancing, wearing masks and gloves if you do go out, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

This crisis reaffirms the urgent need to create a better, more equitable health care system. We must continue to combat attempts to undermine the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion, which provide health care coverage for millions of Americans. COVID-19 testing should be prioritized in neighborhoods with high African American populations. Greater transparency is needed around racial disparities in medical staff in addition to the lack of critical supplies and equipment in hospitals primarily serving African Americans.

Amida Care Inc. is a not-for-profit health plan that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to New Yorkers with complex conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders, and people who are of transgender experience or homeless (regardless of HIV status). Amida Care has a wide network of health care providers throughout New York City and is the largest Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP) in New York State. For more information, visit www.amidacareny.org.

The National Black Leadership Commission on Health (Black Health) champions the promotion of health and prevention of diseases to reduce disparities and achieve equity within the black community. Founded as the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, Black Health has expanded focus that includes HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, prostate cancer, sickle cell, diabetes and mental health. Championing black health through advocacy, policy and action is the main goal of the newly expanded organization.