



Dear COFA Community Members, Allies and Friends :

We are writing to express and request heartfelt solidarity with you, during these intense and challenging times. The recent news of COVID-19 outbreak in our community has increased anxiety for everyone. But, COVID 19 does not justify racism and xenophobia against any race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, gender, etc.

Although the anxiety and concerns over the coronavirus are understandable, the stereotypes and exclusion are not. Instead of excluding people, we ask that you not perpetuate fear and instead, show care and concern as being diagnosed adds layers and layers of challenges for many people especially those who have been historically underserved. For many generations people from different racial, ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds have experienced persistent health disparities and barriers, long before COVID-19.

For those people that took the leap to get tested whether for concern of your own health, your family, and our community – THANK YOU! Stigma often prevents us from wanting to take that leap and make a **smart and proactive choice** to find out. But we know from our health officials that, “quick identification of cases, means quick treatment for people and immediate isolation to prevent the spread. (Sanchez, 2020, American Heart Association)” **You made the right choice!**

For our community members who have been tested positive, know that our hearts, thoughts and prayers are with you and your families. If you need assistance, know you're deserving of resources and support, so PLEASE ASK! There are more people who are here for you and want to help, so do not hesitate to reach out. What you may not realize is that by asking, you open the door for many people who do not know what to do, where to go; who and how to ask for help, to begin to know and find out, much-needed information for themselves.

Asking for help and sharing your story also provides a perspective that may not be known or considered by those who are in positions of power and are making decisions that may impact you. In doing so, they are able to consider our situations and ensure that as decisions are being made, our stories and experiences are included, considered and resources can be appropriated for us, in an effort to decrease barriers and advance equity.

As community members, we encourage you to reach out to someone, see if they are okay, ask if they could use a friend or advocate at this time, volunteer, or find ways to make a difference. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

Know that we are in this together! Please take care of yourself, stay safe and practice all safety guidelines including social distancing, wearing a mask, washing your hands regularly, etc., for the benefit of ourselves, our families, community and above all -- our high-risk populations.

With love and unity,



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