

LIVE UPDATES

Get the latest news about coronavirus in Illinois



CORONAVIRUS NEWS POLITICS

# Community groups call for health care equity as black Chicago grapples with COVID-19

“The spread of COVID-19 to the heart of Chicago, which is the black community, has shown and uncovered every dark and ugly disparity that my community faces daily,” Action Now Chicago Executive Director Debra Harris said.

By Sam Charles | Apr 20, 2020, 12:27pm CDT





Jitu Brown, of the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization and Journey for Justice Alliance, speaks Monday to reporters outside Mercy Hospital & Medical Center on the South Side about racial disparities in health care during the coronavirus pandemic. | Ashlee Rezin Garcia/Sun-Times

---

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately affect Chicago's black residents, community groups gathered at a South Side hospital Monday to call for greater equity in the city's health care infrastructure.

"Racism didn't start with COVID, and we are tired of continuously kicking the can down the road — blaming people that are underserved without addressing key issues that contribute to the disparities that we see that leave particular populations more vulnerable," said Jitu Brown, of the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization and Journey for Justice Alliance.

Brown, representatives from Action Now Chicago and the Lugenia Burns Hope Center called on Mayor Lori Lightfoot to deploy mobile testing units on the South and West sides and to develop, with community input, "an equity investment strategy for health care in the black community."

"Waking up every morning as a black woman in America is a blessing, while simultaneously being a death sentence because I know of what systems of oppression and white supremacy [think] of me, thinks of African American communities," Action Now Chicago Executive Director Debra Harris said during a news conference outside Mercy Hospital and Medical Center.

"And the spread of COVID-19 to the heart of Chicago, which is the black community, has shown and uncovered every dark and ugly disparity that my community faces daily."

Shortly before the conference began, **Provident Hospital's emergency room reopened**, two weeks after Cook County officials temporarily closed the unit after an employee there tested positive for the coronavirus.

As of last week, nearly 65% of COVID-19 deaths in Chicago were among the city's black residents, despite African American people being just 30% of the city's overall population.

“This is not, I’m sorry to say, a surprising story,” Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner **Dr. Allison Arwady said earlier this month**, pointing to the higher incidence of chronic diseases among African Americans and to unequal access to health care, healthy food choices and safe, walkable streets.



**SPONSORED CONTENT**

**If Your Dog Eats Grass (Do This Every Day) [↗](#)**

If Your Dog Eats Grass (Do This Every Day)

By **Dr. Marty** |