

# Focus: HOPE

## EQUITABLE HEALTH

COVID-19 highlighted the health disparities experienced by ethnic communities of America, but there remains work to be done for addressing these disparities. One glaring gap is the number of Blacks experiencing serious complications from COVID-19. Since the disease is most harmful to individuals with pre-existing illnesses like heart disease or diabetes, we must consider historic barriers to wealth, along with persisting institutional biases, making Blacks and poor people more susceptible to these ailments - and commit to addressing the crises immediately.

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention have identified several social determinates pointing to higher risk for people of color, including:

- discrimination and racism in health care, housing, education, criminal justice, and finance;
- healthcare access and utilization as impacted by lack of insurance, transportation, childcare and ability to take time from work, along with barriers related to communication, language, culture, and distrust;
- disproportionate representation in occupations deemed essential, such as healthcare, farms, factories, grocery stores, and public transportation, where there is a higher chance of being exposed, less flexibility to leave the job, low wages limiting their ability to save emergency funds, and limited sick leave, if any;
- crowded housing conditions among minority groups make prevention strategies challenging, while lack of access to jobs and services leads to eviction, homelessness, or sharing of housing.

An additional factor is diet. In 2018, the Michigan Department of Agriculture classified 19 of Detroit's neighborhoods as "food deserts". These neighborhoods lack stores with healthy and affordable food choices and are largely left out of the food and grocery delivery services that have expanded in suburban communities.

Focus: HOPE champions equitable health through advocacy and through its nationally renowned Food Justice program. We coordinate two Free Markets in Detroit and one in Inkster in addition to a vast community network which provides approximately \$40 worth of supplemental groceries to over 45,000 older adults across four counties every single month over the last few decades. Our locations also offer free health screenings, including mammograms, EKGs, blood pressure and glucose checks and more. We partner with Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services to have case workers on site so that any visitors applying for Michigan Medicaid, Medicare, Food Benefits or other assistance don't have far to go since we understand the toll that limited time and mental space can take on a person's health. We partner with the Accounting Aid Society to prepare tax returns at no charge, and with Quicken Loans to reduce property taxes because we get that every little bit counts. But there is more to be done.

### Here's What You Can Do!

- **Volunteer** to [pack and/or deliver food boxes](#) once monthly. Enlist others for a day of service!
- **Advocate** by [asking your state and local leaders](#) to assign resources for addressing health disparities near you. The governor of Michigan has declared racism a public health crisis. Urge those in other states to follow suit.