



Statement of Dr. Vivian Bradley Johnson to the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force:

February 26, 2021

Dr. Nunez-Smith and Members of the Task Force:

The Parkland Health & Hospital System appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the work our system is actively doing to help underserved communities affected by COVID-19. Parkland provides care to indigent, uninsured and underinsured residents of Dallas County, averaging more than 60,000 hospital discharges and 1 million outpatient visits annually. Parkland's patient payor mix is approximately 30% charity, 30% Medicaid, 20% Medicare and 10% self-pay.

Throughout the pandemic the Dallas County community has relied heavily on us to provide care to an increasing number of individuals diagnosed with COVID-19. In order to handle the increasing volume of patients, Parkland has transformed surgical operating suites into a designated tactical care unit to increase capacity for critically ill COVID-19 patients. Additionally, mega drive-through and walk-up sites were established in vulnerable communities to improve access to COVID-19 testing, and, once available, vaccinations were provided at the drive-through locations as well. On top of this effort, two on-campus clinics were opened to increase capacity for individuals eligible to receive vaccinations based on criteria established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and our state and local health departments.

Of the 256,072 COVID-19 tests administered by Parkland to date, 62% were provided at community testing sites located in ZIP Codes identified with vulnerable populations. Approximately 43,000 of these patients tested positive for COVID-19 (66% Hispanic, 20% Black, and 9% White) with 11% of them hospitalized at Parkland. Out of the 1% of patients who died due to COVID-19, 72% were Hispanic, 15% Black, and 10% White.

For many individuals, including those facing the challenges associated with health inequities, their local pharmacist provides a trusted source of health information. Whether practicing in a neighborhood retail pharmacy or serving a large population through a safety-net provider such as Parkland, pharmacists are a trusted source of vaccine safety and efficacy information. They are uniquely positioned to offer expertise on the handling and distribution of vaccines along with additional insight into the barriers of care.

In an effort to eliminate barriers such as lack of information or dispelling misinformation, Parkland has launched a multi-faceted approach to marketing and outreach to vulnerable populations. Parkland's targeted communications, which provide education and encourage individuals to get vaccinated, include



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the expertise of our pharmacists in tandem with other health experts and community leaders who have received the vaccine. Our messaging campaign involves partnerships with Black and Hispanic community leaders and organizations such as faith-based groups, sororities, businesses, and elected officials. This targeted marketing campaign including paid, earned, and social media strategies is continuing to provide patient and community education. We believe the influence and expertise of pharmacists is critical to these discussions and urge the Task Force to also draw on pharmacists' expertise as critical members of the healthcare team.

Parkland has vaccination-certified pharmacists who have been working diligently to support the vaccination efforts at our drive-through mega sites. Pharmacists were mobilized to procure, store, deliver, and assist clinical staff to administer more than 122,000 vaccinations within the first months of vaccine availability. Pharmacists continue to provide a valuable and much-needed resource within the hospital walls and beyond. We urge the Task Force to take advantage of the expertise that pharmacists provide.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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Parkland Health and Hospital System