

PUBLIC COMMENT

Submitted to: The Office of Equity Task Force

Submitted by: Jean Mendoza

Submission date: May 8, 2020 (revised May 12, 2020)

Dear Health Equity Task Force,

May 12, 2020

This is a message and request from Yakima County, the part of Washington State that is suffering most severely from the coronavirus. The request is for a *Resolution from the Health Equity Task Force* asking the State of Washington to hire additional outreach workers for Yakima County. These workers would actively track infection from person to person and assist families to isolate and care for members who are infected with the coronavirus.

It is no secret that we have high rates of poverty and many crowded homes where multi-generational families live together and do their best to survive and thrive. Many of us live from pay check to pay check with the help of food banks and subsidized medical care.

It is no secret that the Yakima Health District (YHD) has been underfunded for decades. Yakima County is at the very bottom of spending for public health at around \$18 per person, while San Juan County at the other end of the spectrum spends about \$250 per person. With a staff of 29, YHD simply cannot accomplish all the tasks we take for granted during an epidemic.

Washington's successful strategies to suppress tuberculosis can and should be a model for state actions during the COVID 19 pandemic. A state or county that does not provide this most basic public health response to infectious disease acknowledges that the lives of some people are unimportant and expendable. This is health equity in its rawest form.

In my humble but professionally based opinion adding outreach workers would be the most cost-effective way to stop the spread of the virus within Yakima County and, as a corollary, to the rest of Washington state. Please draft and send a *Resolution from the Health Equity Task Force* that lays out an appropriate public health response on the part of Washington State for Yakima County and other seriously impacted areas.

Sincerely,

Jean Mendoza

White Swan, WA