

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 1, 2020

County Commissioners
Board of County Commissioners
Palm Beach County
301 N. Olive Avenue
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Dear Commissioners,

As you are aware, several areas in the county have been hit especially hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that the disease moves very quickly and knows no boundaries.

In response, a virtual roundtable was recently held, with area elected officials, non-profit organizations, and Dr. Alina Alonso, Florida Department of Health Director for Palm Beach County, to discuss the high incidence of COVID-19 in “hot spots” that include ZIP Codes 33415, 33463, 33461, 33460, and 33430 (encompassing Lake Worth Beach, Boynton Beach, Palm Springs, Greenacres, and Belle Glade). We discussed how to improve the ongoing efforts to stop the spread.

The following factors were highlighted:

- High number of non-English speaking persons;
- Inadequate communication;
- High number of workers in restaurant, hospitality, landscape jobs;
- Very crowded living conditions;
- Crowded transportation issues;
- Absence of state or federal economic support to supplement income from missing work;
- Hospitals and other healthcare facilities are unaware of supportive housing;
- Infected workers are not staying in supportive housing;
- COVID-19 testing is at inconvenient hours;
- Infected workers not fully cooperative with contact tracers;
- Lack of health insurance coverage.

Some suggestions we heard:

- Resources to help individuals stay home from work when sick;
- Solutions for supported home isolation for those exposed to the virus;
- Outreach to community leaders, health providers, and hospitals to ensure knowledge of alternate isolation opportunities;
- Community health workers who can work closely with workers and their families;
- Convenient testing locations including before and/or after work hours;
- Simplified messaging on preventative health measures and guidelines for those with limited English or reading skills;
- Rental, food, and other economic assistance;
- Expanded opportunity for input from community stakeholders.

Based upon the conditions and recommendations, we suggest the following actions be taken:

- A coordinator be appointed and community task committee be created to address the concerns of hot spots;
- A system that is culturally sensitive to the community be put in place to educate, test, contact trace, and isolate patients where necessary;
- Community health workers who can work closely with workers and their families be immediately dispatched to these hot spots;
- That appropriate protective equipment be provided for in home isolation where possible.
- Testing should be done at times convenient to reach workers when they are off work including on a weekly basis (not one time) for all workers at gathering points like where workers enter transportation for work. Workers should be given certificates to show they've been tested.
- The County should reach out to employers using hotspot workers to encourage a humane healthy approach to stopping the spread of COVID-19.
- The county should work with non-profit organizations to encourage economic help to workers who must isolate and have no financial support from government, family, or friends. This should be in the form of rental, food, health, and other assistance to meet short term needs while the infected worker self isolates.
- Where workers have federal identification or social security numbers, the county should consider using CARES Act funds for short term direct economic assistance.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue of the spread of COVID-19 in hot spot areas. We urge your immediate action. We are all in this together. Our offices stand ready to support you in this important effort.

Sincerely,



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

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Sen. Lori Berman (District 31)

Rep. Tina Polsky (District 81)

Rep. David Silvers (District 87)

Mayor Joel Flores, Greenacres

Mayor Bev Smith, Village of Palm Springs

Mayor Pam Triolo, Lake Worth Beach

CC: Verdenia Baker, Palm Beach County Administrator

Dr. Alina Alonso, Florida Department of Health Director for Palm Beach County