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Congress of the United States
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June 13, 2020

Patrick Allen
Director
Oregon Health Authority
500 Summer Street, NE, E-20
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Director Allen,

It has been more than three months since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Oregon. As the virus continues to spread, I remain deeply concerned about the effect of the pandemic on communities of color, and in particular the Latinx community. In your work to protect Oregonians from COVID-19, I urge you to do all you can to make sure that appropriate resources, support, and information are provided to this community, which has been disproportionately affected by this deadly disease.

The Latinx community is approximately 13 percent of the state's population, yet accounts for 35 percent of the total number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Oregon. This disparity is glaring and concerning. One positive step in addressing this issue is the Oregon Health Authority's recently updated guidance to allow testing for people who identify as Black, African-American, Latino, Latina, Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander *even if they are asymptomatic*.

Despite this guidance, however, I was alarmed to read the Oregonian's coverage of Michael and Milady Lopez, a Latinx couple in Washington County who sought to be tested for COVID-19 at two separate hospitals. They were denied, reportedly because they did not have symptoms.

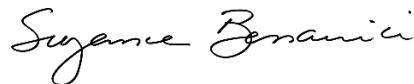
Expanded testing is an important step in slowing the spread among this community, but it is clear that barriers still exist to getting resources and support to the Latinx population. As you continue to address this disparity, I encourage you to work directly with healthcare providers and other community leaders to provide them with a clear plan to get information and resources to their communities; a plan that takes into consideration potential language and cultural barriers.

Additionally, as the Congressional Representative for NW Oregon, I respectfully ask that you respond to the following questions:

1. What steps is OHA taking to inform health care providers and individuals who identify as Black, African-American, Latino, Latina, Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander about the updated guidance on testing asymptomatic individuals?
2. In addition to approving increased testing, what is OHA doing to address the racial disparities in COVID-19 diagnoses, and how are you communicating your efforts to stakeholders?
3. What additional support does OHA need to complete this work?

I stand ready to work with you on behalf of our diverse communities. Please do not hesitate to contact me for assistance. I look forward to receiving an update on your strategy to combat the disparities in COVID-19 spread among Oregon's Latinx population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne Bonamici".

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Cc: Governor Kate Brown