

EMBARGOED UNTIL 3:00 PM ET, APRIL 30, 2019

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REMARKS AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CBC EMERGENCY TASKFORCE ON BLACK
YOUTH SUICIDE AND MENTAL HEALTH

BY [DR. MICHAEL A. LINDSEY](#)

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AND RESEARCH AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY](#); AND TASKFORCE WORKING

GROUP LEAD MEMBER

APRIL 30, 2019

(As prepared)

THANK YOU TO REP. BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN, REP. KAREN BASS, AND
TO ALL OF THE ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK
CAUCUS WHO RECOGNIZED THE EMERGENCY THAT WE ARE FACING WITH
THE MENTAL HEALTH OF OUR BLACK CHILDREN.

THANK YOU FOR DECIDING THAT **IT'S TIME TO RING THE ALARM.**

I'D ALSO LIKE TO THANK MY FELLOW WORKING GROUP MEMBERS WHO
HAVE BEEN WITH US THROUGHOUT THE JOURNEY TO THIS DAY, AND WHO
YOU WILL HEAR MORE FROM IN A MOMENT:

- DR. ALFIEE BRELAND-NOBLE

AND

- DR. WILLIAM B. LAWSON

YOU WILL ALSO HEAR FROM

- DR. SHERRY MOLOCK

AND

- DAVID JOHNS

WHO WILL JOIN OUR PANEL DISCUSSION IN A FEW MOMENTS.

THANK YOU BOTH.

LET ME TELL YOU WHY THIS IS AN URGENT MATTER FOR US.

AT THE MCSILVER INSTITUTE FOR POVERTY POLICY AND RESEARCH AT NEW
YORK UNIVERSITY, WE HAVE SPENT A LOT OF TIME AND ENERGY STUDYING

THE MENTAL HEALTH OF BLACK CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, AS WELL AS THE INTERVENTIONS AND RESOURCES THEY NEED TO THRIVE AT HOME AND IN SCHOOL.

IN THE COURSE OF THAT RESEARCH WE'VE SEEN AN ALARMING TREND AMONG BLACK CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF FIVE AND 12, AS FIRST NOTED BY [EPIDEMIOLOGIST JEFFREY BRIDGE](#) AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

BLACK CHILDREN HAVE A SUICIDE RATE THAT IS TWICE AS HIGH AS WHITE CHILDREN; AND, FURTHERMORE, THE RATES HAVE DOUBLED OVER THE PAST GENERATION.

THIS IS A NATIONAL CRISIS!

WE MUST ACT NOW TO IDENTIFY THE REASONS FOR THIS AND TO DETERMINE WHAT RESOURCES ARE REQUIRED TO SAVE OUR CHILDREN.

WE MUST ACT IN THE MEMORY OF 10-YEAR-OLD [SEVEN BRIDGES OF LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY](#); 12-YEAR-OLD [STORMIYAH DENSON-JACKSON](#) OF WASHINGTON, D.C.; AND 9-YEAR-OLD [MCKENZIE ADAMS OF LINDEN,](#)

ALABAMA, ALL WHO ENDED THEIR LIVES WHEN THOSE LIVES HAD BARELY
BEGUN.

AND WE MUST ACT IN THE MEMORY OF 11-YEAR-OLD RYLAN HAGAN OF
WASHINGTON, DC, WHOSE MOTHER RECENTLY REACHED OUT TO ME AND
ASKED WHAT IS BEING DONE SO SHE CAN UNDERSTAND WHY HER
BEAUTIFUL BOY ENDED HIS OWN LIFE BY HANGING.

THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE YEAR OUR WORKING GROUP WILL BE
DEVELOPING A REPORT TO PRESENT TO THE TASKFORCE.

THE REPORT WILL HELP THE TASKFORCE MEMBERS —AND THE NATION—
UNDERSTAND WHAT IS CAUSING THE INCREASE IN SUICIDES BY BLACK
CHILDREN, HOW TO IDENTIFY SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR AND WHAT STEPS WE
RECOMMEND TO REVERSE THIS TREND.

MEANWHILE, WE DO KNOW THE FOLLOWING:

WE NEED TARGETED RESOURCES TO STUDY WHY THE SUICIDE RATE IS
RISING IN BLACK CHILDREN AND OTHER AT-RISK GROUPS.

WE ALSO NEED RESOURCES TO TAKE THOSE FINDINGS AND DEVELOP EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS THAT WILL ADDRESS THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR YOUTH.

FURTHERMORE, SCHOOLS ARE THE TOP PROVIDER OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO CHILDREN.

THEREFORE, EVERY SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER.

AND, THE NUMBER OF PROVIDERS SHOULD BE PROPORTIONATE TO THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS.

YET WE OFTEN SEE TWO OR THREE SCHOOLS SHARING A SINGLE PROVIDER.

INSTEAD, WE NEED THE POLICIES AND FUNDING IN PLACE TO GIVE STUDENTS THE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT THAT THEY DESERVE—SUPPORT THAT CAN HELP TO ADDRESS AND IDENTIFY PROBLEMS BEFORE THE WORST HAPPENS

WE NEED TO RING THE ALARM, AND THEN ANSWER THE CALL WITH THE RESOURCES AND POLICIES TO SAVE LIVES.

AGAIN, WE ARE GRATEFUL TO REP. BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN AND THE
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOR
RECOGNIZING THE URGENCY OF THIS MOMENT.

I, AND THE OTHER WORKING GROUP MEMBERS, LOOK FORWARD TO
ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS.

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