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Cincinnati's Black Physicians Come Together to Encourage Vaccinations for the Black Community

***Partnership with Center for Closing the Health Gap and Cincinnati Medical Association
seeks to dispel vaccination myths and educate Black residents about vaccine safety***

CINCINNATI, OHIO – APRIL 13, 2021 – Black Physicians in Cincinnati – in partnership with the Center for Closing the Health Gap and the Cincinnati Medical Association (CMA) – have created and distributed an open letter to the Black community. The letter is designed to educate Black and Brown residents about the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccinations and encourage them to get a vaccine as soon as one is made available to them.

Signed and supported by more than 50 Black Physicians across the region, the campaign is working to overcome decades of mistrust by communities of color in healthcare providers and reverse early trend data about COVID-19 vaccines and how they are being perceived and distributed.

Several of those physicians are featured in [a new video produced by The Health Gap](#) that lays out vaccination facts, addresses the historical hesitancy around vaccines and urges Black and Brown communities – and all people – to get vaccinated.

“The Black community has been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Dr. Anisa Shomo, President of the Cincinnati Medical Association and one of the project organizers. “The vaccines are a safe and effective way for people in the Black community to overcome that disproportionate impact and protect themselves and their families.”

Dr. Louito Edje, University of Cincinnati Medical Center Associate Dean of Graduate Medical Education and member of the CMA, has been a vocal advocate for raising awareness and educating the community. She has already lost four family members to COVID-19 and was part of the Moderna vaccine trial. She knows the three approved vaccines can stop the spread and prevent further heartache.

“The conversation is that, especially as a Black woman, it is absolutely safe,” said Dr. Edje. “Leading sometimes means making hard decisions so learners you are advocating for don’t have to. It is always the right time to step up and do the right thing.”

Black physicians, and leaders from business, government and non-profit circles have joined Dr. Edje in signing the community letter encouraging residents to take the vaccine. The letter can be found at <https://covid19communityresources.com/jointhecause>.

Renee Mahaffey Harris, President and CEO of the Center for Closing the Health Gap and creator of the COVID-19 Community Resources website, said Black people in the Cincinnati region mirror national attitudes. A Kaiser Family Foundation study found that 35% of Black adults say they definitely or probably would not get a vaccine,

as well as one-third of essential workers and 30% of healthcare employees. The Health Gap has organized nearly 30 virtual town halls to give doctors and other healthcare experts a forum to answer questions about the pandemic and the vaccine.

“If there is a silver lining in this vaccine rollout, it’s that we have time to help people make informed decisions. We need to meet people where they are. Vaccine hesitancy can’t be erased, but it can be eased,” said Harris, who received her vaccine last month. “I want to be part of the solution. I may have reservations and questions, but I know this is what I need to do for myself and for everyone else.”

To learn more about the education campaign, virtual town halls and other resources related to the pandemic, visit <https://covid19communityresources.com>.

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