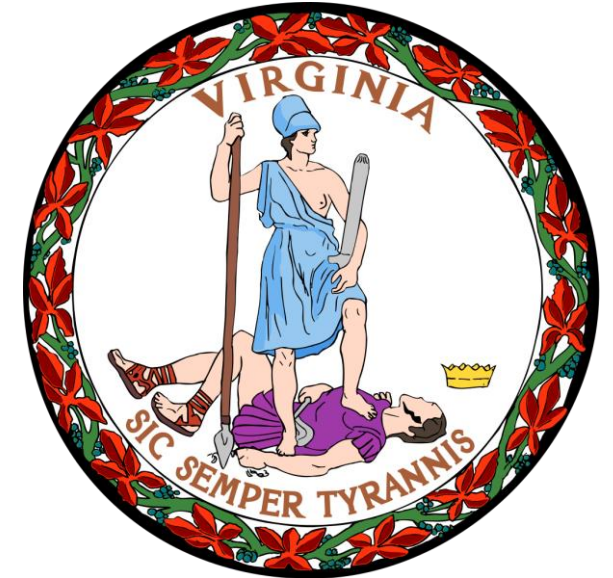


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EXAMINING HEALTH EQUITY ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Hannah Furstenberg-Beckman, Jackson Miller, Colleen Narlock

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

To support ongoing work across the Governor's Office, Department of Emergency Management, and Department of Health on embedding equity in policy making, particularly in response to interlocking crises tied to COVID-19.

Focus Areas:

- *50 State Scan: Codifying Equity in Legislation & Emergency Management*
- *Centering Community Voices and Needs*
- *Way Forward for Harvard and Virginia*



50 State Scan: Codifying Equity at the State Level and in Emergency Management



REVIEW OF APPROACHES TO “HEALTH EQUITY” ACROSS ALL 50 STATES



- **Offices dedicated to advancing health equity (25+ states)**
 - Reports, toolkits, dashboards, trainings, strategic plans, statewide initiatives, and recommendations for legislative solutions.
- **Newly-created Health Equity Task Forces (7+ states)**
 - Examining disparities, issuing reports, community outreach, PPE distribution, developing short- and long-term recommendations.

PROMISING LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIES TO CODIFY EQUITY



- **Legislation to declare racism a public health crisis**
- **Legislation requiring equal employment opportunity plans across state actors**
- **Executive orders enacting large-scale policies focused on equity**
- **Using the state constitution to establish civil rights departments and council structures**

EQUITY IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



- **Inclusive planning in emergency response**
- **Partnerships between the public health department and community-based organizations**
- **Legislation to Codify the and Office of Equal Rights and Community Inclusion within FEMA**

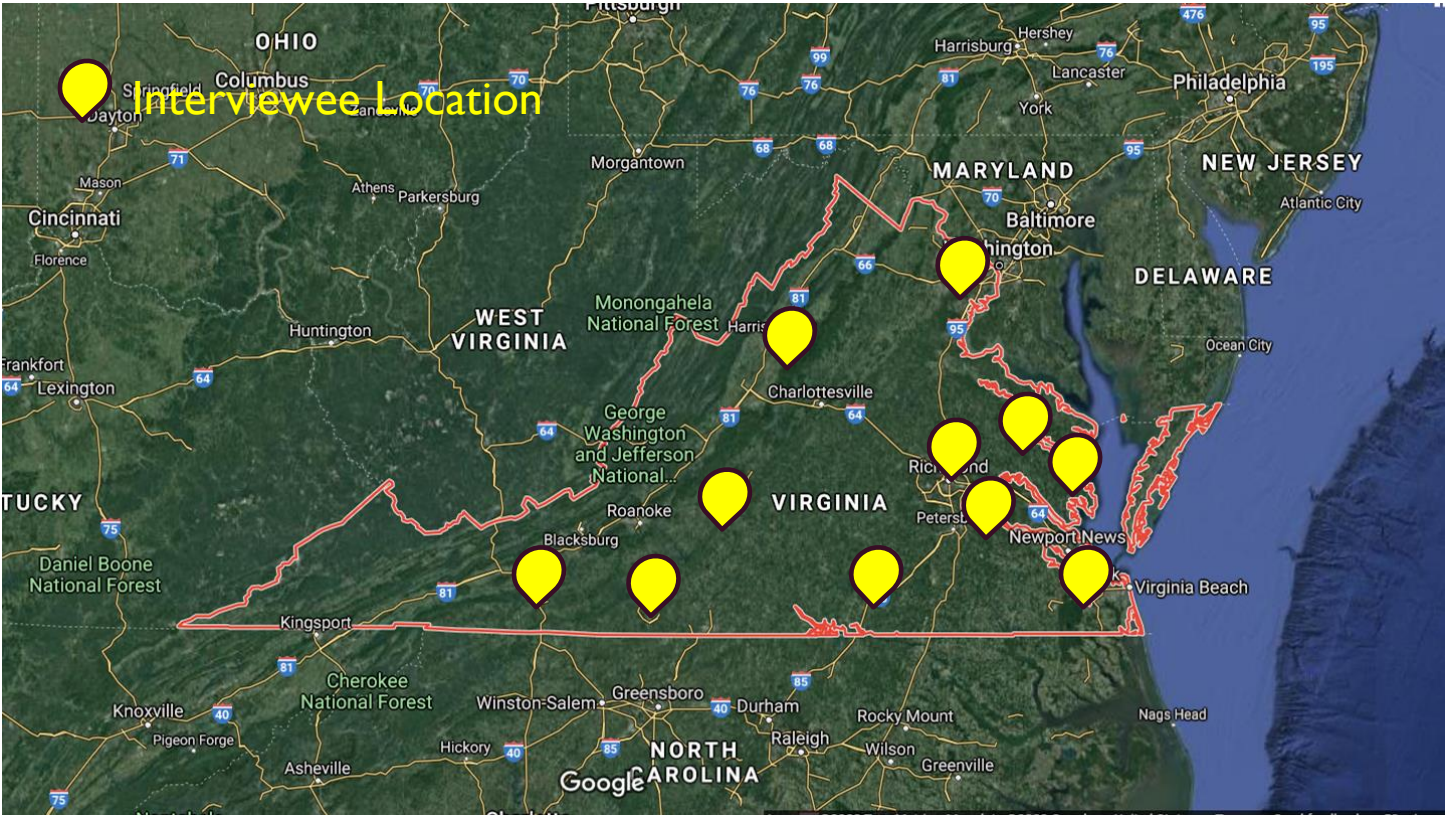


CENTERING COMMUNITY NEED

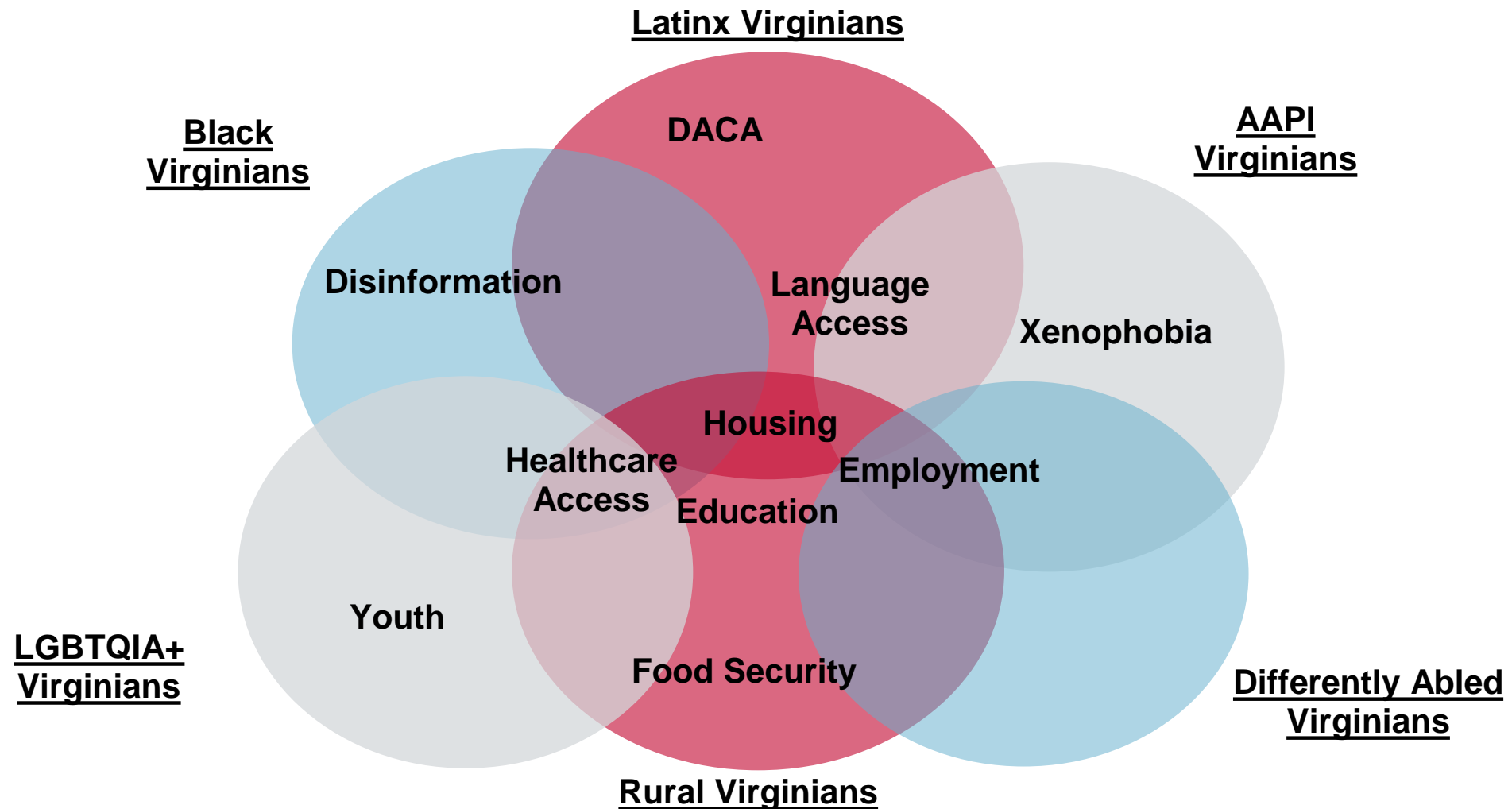


CENTERING COMMUNITY NEED

WE INTERVIEWED A DOZEN COMMUNITY LEADERS ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH TO SUPPLEMENT VDH'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



LEVERAGING VDH'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERIES TO IDENTIFY CORE ISSUES FOR KEY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS



KEY FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Distrust in government remains a huge obstacle in community engagement. Virginia should foreground repair and humility when working with vulnerable communities



Recognize (and fund) the work that is already being done on the ground. Empower communities to share information *up* to VDH. Commit resources to grassroots work



Health equity cannot be separate from other issues of injustice. Housing, employment, & education were top concerns among those interviewed.

When people who are on the ground - doing the organizing, getting people tested, making change - and then people from the state level come out with reports or projects of things they're already doing, but don't have funding to do...how are people going to feel... how can people reach out to VDH to share information UP instead of information just coming down

-Faith Leader, Richmond

if you go back a little in history you see the Tuskegee experiment, or the history of gynecological treatment of Black women by the "godfather" of gynecology so there is a healthy distrust of government.

-Local Government Official, Southwest Virginia

When COVID hit there was an easing of restrictions for mortgages, but nothing for renters. There was already a high number of evictions. What do you think is going to happen after the moratorium is lifted?

-Reproductive Justice Advocate, Lynchburg



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD



BRINGING TOGETHER COMMUNITY VOICES & LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIES



Guiding Principles

- **Recognize historical harm and injustices**
- **Empower and incorporate community voices**
- **Commit resources**
- **Utilize clear metrics for accountability**

Implementation Strategies

- **Reduce the barriers to accessing government services**
- **Use trusted messengers and diverse communication channels**
- **Articulate equity goals and the intended results**

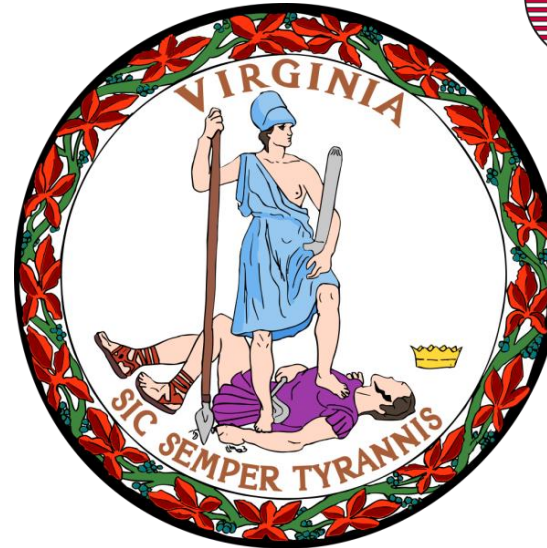
POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH



- **Bolster language access and support for Virginia’s differently-abled communities**
- **Make publicly accessible, datasets that show the root causes of disparate health outcomes, tied to harmful policymaking**
- **Use legislative models to codify an equity working group structure into law for future emergency responses**
- **Form coalitions with other states / localities on equity in emergency management**
- **Invest in community-based emergency response efforts *and* “blue sky” initiatives.**

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS FOR VIRGINIA / HARVARD PARTNERSHIP

- **Draft legislation to codify equity and an advocacy plan to successfully pass legislation during the 2021 General Assembly Session**
- **Expand community engagement to center grassroots voices**
- **Address inequities in contact tracing operations**
- **Extend health equity lens to vaccine distribution policy**



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