



**MEMPHIS INTERFAITH COALITION FOR ACTION AND HOPE**  
**Immigration & Intercultural Equity Task Force**  
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Thursday, March 26, 2020

Inequity in Memphis/Shelby County has been MICAHA's target since our founding in 2017. We know that this COVID-19 crisis will only exacerbate the issues that our three task forces— **Economic Equity, Education Equity, and Immigration & Intercultural Equity**— have been working on.

MICAHA's Immigration & Intercultural Equity Task Force gathered via Zoom on Monday, March 23rd and would like to issue the following:

**During this COVID-19 Pandemic,  
MICAHA Supports the following in Memphis/Shelby County:**

- Decarceration and deconcentration of Shelby County jails as well as the implementation of policies and procedures to protect the health and safety of those who remain incarcerated
- Grace and evenness across the city and county in the enforcement of the “Safer at Home” executive order, regardless of race or immigration status
- No barriers in virus testing or relief distribution as it relates to recipient's immigration or housing status (ie: not requiring state-issued ID or proof of address)
- Access to public information, including press conferences and all updates regarding COVID-19, in multiple languages and in various formats
- A halt to all local ICE operations, activity, and collaborations related to civil immigration enforcement, including compliance with administrative warrants or detainers, so that ICE's targeted populations can access medical attention, food, etc. without the fear of being detained.

**During this COVID-19 Pandemic,  
MICAHA lifts up the good work of the following entities in Memphis/Shelby County:**

- Shelby County Schools for their excellent, timely communication of COVID-19 related information to non-English speakers through their translated website (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, and French) as well as through Spanish-only Facebook and Twitter.
- *La Prensa Latina Media, El Informante de Memphis, Memphis Noticias* and other Spanish language news outlets for providing prompt and accurate information in Spanish
- Latino Memphis for organizing an ongoing conversation with organizations and community advocates that work with the Latinx community in Memphis to identify available resources and gaps
- Shelby County Sheriff Floyd Bonner's implementation of an official Expeditor in 2019 to move individuals with low bonds through the system more quickly to shorten pretrial detentions and to work with the district attorney and public defender's offices to determine if there are better alternative placements or programs for individuals placed in the criminal justice system, reducing the local jail population by several hundred within the first eight months.

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**During this COVID-19 Pandemic,  
MICAHA asks these entities in Memphis/Shelby County to step up in the following ways:**

- **Mayor Harris, Sheriff Bonner, District Attorney Weirich, Commissioner Billingsley, Director Alexander:** Immediately take action to reduce the current jail and prison population and to protect all of those who are currently incarcerated, putting measures and safeguards in place to minimize the risk to those in custody, by doing the following:
  - 1) Work with Shelby County’s criminal court judges to secure the immediate release of all nonviolent pretrial detainees whose only barrier to release is an inability to pay bail as well as those who are currently incarcerated on technical probation violations;
  - 2) Ask the juvenile courts to release all youth who are awaiting detention and adjudication hearings to the care of their family and community;
  - 3) Provide coronavirus testing and medical screenings to all incoming detainees at the time of booking and upon exit for those being released;
  - 4) Secure the release of all pregnant, elderly, or medically high-risk inmates;
  - 5) Make public all plans, measures, and actions taking place to protect the health and safety of all of those who remain incarcerated; and,
  - 6) Issue citations rather than taking into custody those charged with minor offenses.These measures should remain in place so long as the threat of COVID-19 exists within Shelby County and until the courts have reopened and each of the accused have an opportunity to have their day in court.
  
- **Mayor Strickland and Mayor Harris:** All communications (statements, graphics, website) from the City and County (including the Health Department) should be translated into multiple languages so that non-English speakers are receiving this life-saving information. (Top languages in SCS: Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, and French)
  
- **Mayor Strickland and Director Rallings:** Provide details on how the “Safer at Home” order will be enforced; MICAHA advocates for education of the order to be the first response, followed by citations only when necessary. Public information about this enforcement should then be shared out in multiple languages to reach as many Memphians as possible.