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Resources >

PTS Neighborhood Collaborative >

Metro-Urban Institute >

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THE CONTEXT FOR COVID IN PITTSBURGH

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a magnifying glass for everyday life in Pittsburgh's neighborhoods. On paper, the city was well-positioned to weather a crisis like COVID-19. Pittsburgh boasts a huge medical community, robust tech, research and academic sectors, and an income-to-housing-cost ratio that has landed the city on lists of "most livable cities" for years.

Even before COVID hit, though, a quick review of our individual communities would have revealed that the city's wealth and resources were not evenly spread:

Across our largest majority African American neighborhoods, Homewood and the Hill District, the poverty rate is two to three times higher—40 to 60 percent—than for the city as a whole.



Schools in those neighborhoods have a more than 20 percent higher rate of economically disadvantaged students than in the district overall.

Basic resources like health care, pharmacies, and groceries have long been far less available in these neighborhoods than in other parts of the city.

The lived implications of these inequities have become even more visible and urgent as COVID has affected the city.

COVID AND OUR RESPONSE

The first cases of COVID-19 were reported in Pennsylvania on March 6. As the month went on, the effects cascaded: schools were closed, nonessential businesses shut down, and by the end of the month, a shelter-in-place order was announced statewide. Like flipping a switch, many aspects of daily life stopped completely or were forced online.

For many in Pittsburgh, this meant a period of adjustment. For people living in Pittsburgh's poorest communities, though, these changes weren't simply a matter of inconvenience. Instead, sheltering from COVID also meant the end of access to basic services as well as access to important safety nets that sustained daily life.

With the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, we began our work by identifying local nonprofit leaders who could help us learn more about COVID's impact on Pittsburgh's African American and Latinx communities, and then worked with them to identify their most pressing needs. Based on their input, we distributed more than \$100,000 in grant monies focused on supporting emergency access to food, technology, and advocacy services in Pittsburgh's Hill District and Homewood neighborhoods as well as to the city's diverse Latinx communities. These grantees, in turn, are serving as our story-gathering partners as the pandemic continues, sharing their experiences in service provision and connecting us with those most acutely affected by COVID here in the city.

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