NEWLY FORMED COOPERATIVE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN BALTIMORE PARTNERING WITH 4 BUILD CONGREGATIONS TO COLLECT PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR HEALTH WORKERS IN CITY COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Baltimore Health Professionals Mutual Aid Cooperative is asking individuals, artisans and craftspeople, small businesses, and other organizations to donate supplies, specifically: disposable gloves, hand sanitizer, Clorox wipes, face shields, goggles, surgical masks, N95 masks and isolation gowns. These can be dropped off from now through Sunday, March 29, from 10am-4pm, at:

- Stillmeadow Community Fellowship on 5110 Frederick Avenue,
- Memorial Episcopal Church on 1407 Bolton Street,
- The Church of the Redeemer on 5603 North Charles Street, and
- Sacred Heart of Jesus Roman Catholic Church on 600 South Conkling Street.

All 4 congregations are member institutions of BUILD, Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development, a people's power organization that has been working to improve the lives of Baltimoreans for over 40 years. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, BUILD institutions committed to speaking to 10,000 people to create a new vision for Baltimore, a goal they say will not be stopped by the virus. Through Turnaround Tuesday, leaders and organizers talked to over 600 people in 2 days by video conferencing and phone calls. BUILD congregations across the city are organizing to address the current crisis while not losing site of the many issues that are still ongoing. This hasn’t stopped us, it has made our calling clearer.

The issue of the novel coronavirus and COVID-19 had been on the mind of local health professionals, including third-year resident at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Julius Ho, for weeks. As stories from San Francisco, Seattle, New York & Italy continued to pour in, detailing the burdens being navigated by health workers on the front lines of the current pandemic, Ho and several of his colleagues came together to organize a response. The initial phase mobilized medical and other graduate students, whose classes had been suspended, to assist health providers struggling to fill childcare needs due to unpredictable shift coverages.
A native of Lexington, MA, Ho found himself with time to devote to working with others to ensure health professionals on the front lines here in Baltimore have all they need in coming weeks. "It is heartbreaking to see doctors and nurses in other cities using bandanas and putting plastic bags on their heads, to try and keep themselves and others safe," Ho said.

The idea of partnering with local congregations to collect donations of personal protective equipment made sense to Ho. Having worked alongside community health workers employed by Hopkins through its partnership with Turnaround Tuesday, BUILD's second-chance jobs movement, Ho was already familiar with the collective power of faith institutions. He also believes collaborating with local congregations will help underline the message that collected supplies will be distributed equitably among community health centers around the city according to need, including smaller clinics who, unlike Hopkins and other larger medical institutions, do not have supply and procurement departments, and who will be providing outpatient care to infected individuals, including city residents who are homeless, uninsured and undocumented.

Fr. Grey Maggiano, rector of Memorial Episcopal Church, welcomes the opportunity to partner in this effort. “At this time of incredible need, it’s very hard for so many churches to have our doors closed. The opportunity to be a sanctuary for the delivery of relief supplies, and to help provide life giving support for the needs of others, is the least we can do.”

Pastor Mike Martin of Stillmeadow Community Fellowship agrees. His congregation has been busy distributing food throughout their community, and collecting supplies for health providers is yet another way Stillmeadow can effectively respond to the current pandemic situation. “We should be available and open to the community in this way.”

Individuals and organizations interested in donating supplies can drop them off at the congregations listed above or contact BmoreHealthMAC@gmail.com.

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Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD) is a broad-based community power organization, rooted in Baltimore’s neighborhoods and congregations. BUILD is a non-partisan, interfaith, multiracial organization dedicated to making Baltimore a better place for all to live and thrive. For over 40 years, BUILD has worked to make safe communities, improve housing, increase job opportunities, and rebuild schools. BUILD is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, the oldest and largest network of community organizations in the United States.