



San Francisco
Department of Public Health

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***** JOINT STATEMENT *****

San Francisco Calls on the Community to Reject Xenophobia and Discrimination

The novel (new) coronavirus has been declared a global health emergency and a national health emergency in the United States. This is a serious and rapidly developing situation, affecting thousands of people worldwide.

The virus originated in Wuhan, China and has spread to several countries including the United States. A person's risk for the illness is based on their travel history, or the travel history of someone they have had close contact with. There is no racial, ethnic or cultural basis for the disease. Yet, we know that discrimination and xenophobia already are surfacing. Members of the Asian Pacific Islander community, especially the Chinese community, have been subjected to discrimination and exclusion, in Asia, Europe, Australia and the United States.

News media are reporting from around the world stories of hostility and discrimination toward Chinese customers and students, and insults hurled in person and on social media. This is unacceptable and harmful. Fear is a deadly epidemic.

We know that racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination cause bad health outcomes. In the case of an emerging illness, stigma about the illness makes people less likely to come forward, to seek help or ask questions. That makes it harder to fight the disease and preserve community health.

The best way for all San Franciscans to stay healthy and prevent the spread of disease is to practice consistent hand washing, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, stay home if you are sick, and get a flu shot. Masks do not prevent illness, but can be helpful for sick people to wear, so that they do not spread germs to others.

San Francisco commercial corridors are all open for business. The City encourages residents and visitors to continue to celebrate Lunar New Year activities with our communities by shopping, dining and supporting our small businesses.

Let's come together with compassion and unity during this stressful time. It's good for your health.

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