



NEWS RELEASE

With COVID-19 on the Rise Amid Vaccine Shortages, Black Clergy Join National Effort to Ramp up COVID-19 Testing in Communities Hardest Hit by Coronavirus

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First COVID-19 testing event launched by a partnership among Quest Diagnostics, Choose Healthy Life and United Way of New York City at Harlem's historic Abyssinian Baptist Church

NEW YORK, Jan. 26, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- In response to the disproportionate and devastating impact COVID-19 has had on Black communities and other underserved communities of color, the first of many "Choose Healthy Life" COVID-19 testing, vaccine awareness and education events took place at the historic **Abyssinian Baptist Church** in Harlem, January 25th. At the event **Reverend Al Sharpton** and **Reverend Jacques DeGraff** were tested to demonstrate the continued importance and ease of testing, even as vaccines begin to be available.

Quest Diagnostics (NYSE: DGX), in partnership with the **Choose Healthy Life Black Clergy Action Plan** and the **United Way of New York City**, provided the testing at this event and will support similar activities in New York City, Atlanta, Detroit, Newark and Washington, DC. over the coming months.

"Testing will continue to play an essential role over the coming months in diagnosing COVID-19 and helping to prevent its continued spread," said **Steve Rusckowski, Chairman, CEO and President of Quest Diagnostics**. "Our work with our partners Choose Healthy Life and the United Way of New York City will help save lives and help stop the disproportionate devastation COVID-19 is wreaking on the Black community is both urgent and necessary. Quest Diagnostics is focused on taking action to address health inequities across our country."

Despite the recent introduction of vaccines in the United States, COVID-19 testing is still critical. One year after the

first case of COVID-19 in the United States, there remains a tremendous need for access to testing to help prevent the virus' spread and to ensure that those impacted get access to treatments sooner and continue to protect the health of the community. As the number of COVID-19 cases continue to rise, testing will continue to have a significant impact on both local and national public health policies, travel restrictions, return to school and offices – all of which directly impact our country's economy.

Rochelle Walensky, M.D., the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has recently called to expand availability of COVID-19 testing, even as vaccines are being rolled out. The United States needs to quickly ramp up the amount and pace of COVID-19 testing and vaccinations to bring the current outbreak under control, Dr. Walensky noted in her first official statement. "Better, healthier days lie ahead. But to get there, COVID-19 testing, surveillance, and vaccination must accelerate rapidly," Dr. Walensky said in a statement. "We must also confront the longstanding public health challenges of social and racial injustice and inequity that have demanded action for far too long."

All too often, underserved communities have been testing deserts during the pandemic. "Equity doesn't happen by default," said **Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith**, chair of **President Biden's Health Equity Task Force** at a recent Conclave held by Choose Healthy Life to launch testing in hard hit, underserved communities. At the Conclave, Dr. Nunez-Smith explained that COVID-19 testing remains a critical element in slowing the spread and tragic impact of the disease, even as vaccines are distributed. "A majority of Black Americans are showing up at hospitals, having never had a COVID-19 test, often with an infection that has progressed so far that antibody therapy is no longer an effective treatment. Testing for COVID has never been more critical," said Dr. Smith.

According to a **report** from the Boston Consulting Group, even if current and future vaccines prove their effectiveness, the need to test for COVID-19 will continue in order to: quickly diagnose symptomatic patients; monitor the spread of disease to larger groups; protect vulnerable populations such as the elderly; provide access to return to work or travel on public transportation and test for immunity from vaccines.

"Because testing remains essential in the fight against this pandemic, it's critical that we make testing easily accessible as COVID-19 continues to devastate Black communities," said **Debra Frazer-Howze**, founder of **Choose Healthy Life**. "We know from experience that leadership from the Black clergy makes all the difference when it comes to building trust in our communities, and we are grateful for their essential support."

"United Way of New York City is proud to be working together with Choose Healthy Life, leveraging our expertise in convening and mobilizing the best of the nonprofit, corporate and public health sectors to provide needed COVID-19 testing to communities of color, beginning in five major cities across the United States," said **Sheena Wright**, **President and CEO of United Way of New York City**.

Quest's involvement with Choose Healthy Life is part of a larger **Quest for Health Equity (Q4HE)**, a multi-year commitment the company announced in 2020 to close health disparities, starting with COVID-19. Q4HE is Quest's long-term commitment to utilize testing and information to address critical health issues that disproportionately impact underserved communities, such as heart disease, diabetes, and COPD.

According to a recent **Quest Diagnostics Health Trends™** report entitled "COVID-19: Magnifying Racial Disparities in U.S. Healthcare," Black Americans view greater testing access as critical to getting the pandemic better under control. Nearly 3 in 4 Black Americans (73%) surveyed view greater access to diagnostic COVID-19 testing as absolutely essential or very important to slowing the pandemic.

In addition to COVID-19 testing, Quest Diagnostics will work with the Choose Healthy Life Black Clergy Action Plan to provide education and guidance to community members in each of the cities with testing sites. This will include empowering and funding teams of "health navigators" – local outreach specialists – to engage their neighbors, build trust and provide critical information to help reduce the destructive toll that COVID-19 is taking on Black communities. Dr. Nunez-Smith emphasized that work must be done to build trust with vulnerable populations via the clergy and culturally relevant local healthcare workers.

Note to media: Footage of the event can be viewed on the **Quest Diagnostics newsroom site**

About Quest Diagnostics

Quest Diagnostics empowers people to take action to improve health outcomes. Derived from the world's largest database of clinical lab results, our diagnostic insights reveal new avenues to identify and treat disease, inspire healthy behaviors and improve health care management. Quest Diagnostics annually serves one in three adult Americans and half the physicians and hospitals in the United States, and our 47,000 employees understand that, in the right hands and with the right context, our diagnostic insights can inspire actions that transform lives.

www.QuestDiagnostics.com.

About Choose Healthy Life

Choose Healthy Life Black Clergy Action Plan is a program developed by D. Fraser Associates (DFA) based on the DFA Choose Healthy Life Standard – a sustainable, scalable and transferable approach to public health. The highly successful Standard was created by Debra Fraser-Howze, principal at DFA and founder of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, to address the AIDS epidemic. It is centered around the Black church – the oldest and most trusted institutions in the Black community. Partnering with the United Way agencies, local health departments and community-based organizations, churches receive the necessary resources, training and support to make available health services to the region's most vulnerable individuals. The Choose Healthy Life Black Clergy Action Plan has been made possible through the support of founding sponsors Quest Diagnostics and the Quest

Diagnostics Foundation, and from Resolve to Save Lives, a global health initiative focused on helping advance scalable, proven strategies to prevent and address epidemics. To learn more, visit: www.ChooseHealthyLife.org

About United Way of New York City

United Way of New York City (UWNYC) fights for the self-sufficiency of every low-income New Yorker by taking on the toughest challenges and creating new solutions to old problems. We win by helping families shift from barely surviving to thriving. We unite by mobilizing the best ideas, relevant data, internal and external experts, and resources—from money to manpower. UWNYC maximizes impact by coordinating and aligning organizations, companies, local government, and New Yorkers to help families eliminate tough choices and live better while making ends meet. To learn more, visit: www.unitedwaynyc.org.

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