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Rt Honourable Baroness Heather Hallett DBE
Fieldfisher
Riverbank House
2 Swan Lane
London
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Sent by email to: chambers@18rlc.co.uk contactholm@parliament.uk

22 December 2021

Dear Baroness Hallett,

The Federation of Ethnic Minority Healthcare Organisations: COVID-19 Public Inquiry

The Federation of Ethnic Minority Healthcare Organisations (“FEMHO”) write as a group of individuals, organisations and networks working in the health and care sectors who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have come together united by a common concern to ensure that the COVID-19 Inquiry addresses important questions of how and why there have been disproportionately adverse COVID-19 health outcomes for members of the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (“BAME”) communities, and particularly disproportionate impacts experienced by BAME health and care sector workers (“HCSWs”).

These are issues of vital importance which we, as BAME health and care sector workers, are uniquely well placed to address and provide insight on during the Inquiry. It is for this reason that we have come together as a consortium to amalgamate our knowledge, experiences and insights into one representative voice.

We welcome the PM’s announcement on 15 December 2021 that you have been appointed as chair of the Inquiry and see this as an important step in commencing the substantive Inquiry in Spring 2022. We further welcome the news that additional panel members will be appointed to assist you in the new year, and that there will be public engagement and consultation on the Inquiry’s terms of reference. We write to you today to introduce ourselves, put forward our suggestions for suitable panel members and request that we be included in the consultation process for the Inquiry’s terms of reference.

Appointment of panel members

It is critical that the Inquiry panel possess the necessary skills and understanding to properly investigate and assess the specific issues facing the BAME community and BAME

HCSWs. To that end, we respectfully submit that, if not already under consideration, the following are put forward:

1. Dame Linda Dobbs
2. Dame Elish Angiolini
3. Lord Victor Adebawale
4. Barbara Mills QC
5. Anesta Weekes QC

Given the significance, scope and public interest in the Inquiry we were somewhat disappointed by the lack of consultation on the appointment of the chair. We however urge you to make the panel selection process rigorous, transparent and open to public consultation and engagement, not least, to inspire public confidence in the process and your leadership.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the issues we have raised in this letter and how we can work with you going forwards.

Yours sincerely

Sent on behalf of FEMHO

cc: The Rt Hon Boris Johnson, Prime Minister. boris.johnson.mp@parliament.uk