



The Florida House of Representatives

Jose R. Oliva
Speaker

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Florida House of Representatives
FROM: Jose R. Oliva, Speaker
Florida House of Representatives
DATE: October 13, 2020
RE: Analysis of Mortality due to COVID-19

While we search for ways to navigate safely through this pandemic, it is imperative to have accurate and properly classified data. To this end I directed the staff of the Florida House of Representatives to obtain the source data for published death counts and conduct an independent analysis of their credibility and validity. The attached report is the result of that effort.

The House report identifies several significant concerns. Most importantly, certification of death—even when done by those with official responsibility to do so—is often lacking in rigor and compliance with regulations and procedures. The lack of rigor in this process undermines the completeness and reliability of the death records.

This raises serious concerns regarding whether the reported deaths are accurate. The answer is that the data has limitations. In other words, the number is roughly accurate, but only with an important caveat. Any death count due to a pandemic will never have the precision of a count of a specific event such as an accident or natural disaster. The count is always impacted by the counting method. In this case, national guidelines drive the count up. CDC has determined that the death count should include persons with COVID even if COVID is not an underlying cause of death. I believe these two categories are fundamentally different. They should both be noted, but not combined.

Precision in data is imperative, not just for proper decision-making, but also for public confidence and consistency of response. The great disparity of perspective between the political parties has been further exacerbated by the loosening of process and fidelity to established norms in classification. Our leaders cannot build upon the soft-footing of compromised data.

I hope you find this report useful as you prepare to tackle numerous important issues in the upcoming session. Thank you.