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Housing Authority of Baltimore City, Legendary Hip Hop Group the Sugarhill Gang Partner on COVID-19 Prevention and Awareness Campaign

Music video combines famous song with important message to wear facial coverings

(BALTIMORE – June 15, 2020) – The Housing Authority of Baltimore City’s (HABC) “Everybody is at Risk” COVID-19 prevention and awareness campaign has partnered with the legendary hip hop group the Sugarhill Gang to help spread the word about wearing facial coverings to stop the spread of the virus.

The Sugarhill Gang, the trailblazing artists with the first rap single to become a Top 40 hit on the Billboard Hot 100 with “Rapper’s Delight”, learned of HABC’s comprehensive efforts to inform and advise residents on best practices to stop the spread of COVID-19 and offered to support the “Everybody is at Risk” campaign. The group combined another one of their legendary hits, “Apache – Jump On it” to create a video and inform residents about the importance of wearing facial coverings.

Founding Sugarhill Gang member Guy “Master Gee” O’Brien resides in Greater Baltimore, and he and fellow members Henry “Hendogg” Williams, Michael “Wonder Mike” Wright, and DJ T Dynasty are acutely aware of the pandemic’s devastating impact on Baltimore city and the African-American community. Sugarhill Gang’s music director Rob “Da Noize” Temple, a talented producer, keyboardist and DJ, died on April 21 due to issues related to the coronavirus. Both Temple’s wife, Judy Smith, and his mother, Margaret Temple, also succumbed to COVID-19, passing away only days prior to his death.

“We have dealt with the virus first-hand and don’t want anyone else to experience the pain and heartbreak we have felt since Rob passed,” said Williams. “We spent the last 15 years touring the world with Rob and now we can’t visit his gravesite or pay our respects to the Temple family due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions.”

Knowing the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on communities of color, Sugarhill Gang is underscoring the importance of wearing a facial covering, frequent hand washing and social distance practices. Of the 284 confirmed deaths in Baltimore, at least 182, or 65 percent, represent African-American lives lost, more than all other races combined. Of the 6,509 positive cases of COVID-19 in Baltimore City, 42 percent are African-American, according to Baltimore City data.

“It is clear COVID-19 does not discriminate,” said HABC CEO Janet Abrahams. “African-Americans are impacted at a much higher rate in Baltimore. Almost all of our residents in our communities are African-American. This is our way of reaching out to residents and to promote best practices during COVID-19.”

Abrahams continued, “With recent reports that COVID-19 cases have increased in parts of the country, it is important that residents continue to wear facial coverings to reduce the spread of the virus. The Sugarhill Gang video has sent a very clear message that residents need to adhere to all safety guidelines.”

“This is much bigger than Baltimore,” said Williams. “With so many protestors speaking up right now, we all need to remember that we are still in a pandemic. COVID-19 is still out there.”

Launched in mid-April, the “Everybody is at Risk” campaign is part of HABC’s efforts to support the safety and health of residents and staff. Signs and other hard-copy materials, email communications, and other digital initiatives promoting social distance practices, frequent handwashing, wearing facial coverings, and other recommended behavioral changes.

Other initiatives launched by the HABC throughout the pandemic include meal delivery services, food and product donations, and providing residents with ongoing updates on all CDC, state and local health department directives and advisories.

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