Xavier Becerra
Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333

March 24, 2021

Dear Secretary Becerra and Director Walensky:

On behalf of the undersigned groups, we write to urge you to ensure funding for COVID-19 public health response activities provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L.117-2) prioritizes the communities of color and tribal communities that are disproportionately affected and underserved.

The disparities in burden of COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and death are troubling, and insufficient demographic data masks the full extent of these disparities.¹ Compounding these inequities is the historical and current lack of resources directed to the communities and neighborhoods that have been hardest hit. For example, in the demographic data available on COVID-19 vaccination thus far, we have seen lower rates of vaccination for Black and Latino populations than for white populations,²,³ despite similar levels of interest in seeking the vaccine across demographics.⁴ These troubling data indicate barriers to services that must be addressed through dedicated funding for communities that lack the infrastructure and resources to achieve an equitable response to the pandemic.

We urge the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to ensure a significant portion of funding through the following sections of the American Rescue Plan Act is directed to specialized efforts by local, state, tribal and territorial public health agencies encouraged to work in partnership with and provide resources to community-based organizations that build trust, ensure access, and provide culturally competent and linguistically appropriate services. Such targeted funding is necessary to promote equity among population groups that are bearing such a heavy burden of COVID-19 illness and death:

- **Sec. 2301:** Funding for COVID-19 Vaccine Activities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- **Sec. 2401:** Funding for COVID-19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Mitigation Activities.

We applaud the recent funding opportunity announcements that allocate targeted funding for these purposes, including the Office of Minority Health’s *Advancing Health Literacy to Enhance Equitable Community Responses to COVID-19*, the allocation of vaccination funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, and the CDC National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved Communities,⁵ including racial and ethnic minority populations, immigrants, and rural communities. We encourage HHS to build upon these investments with continued focus on the people hardest hit by the pandemic.
Sincerely,

Alliance Medical Center
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association on Health and Disability
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Medical Student Association
American Muslim Health Professionals
American Physical Therapy Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Thoracic Society
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Big Cities Health Coalition
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research
Children's HealthWatch
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)
Community Catalyst
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Endocrine Society
Epilepsy Foundation
Families USA
Healthcare Ready
HIV Medicine Association
Human Rights Watch
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Justice in Aging
Lakeshore Foundation
NASTAD
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID)
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Immigration Law Center
National League for Nursing
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Network of Public Health Institutes
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Urban League
National Working Positive Coalition
Peggy Lillis Foundation
People For the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Prevent Blindness
Prevention Institute
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Public Health Accreditation Board
Public Health Institute
Research!America
RESULTS
Safe States Alliance
Share Our Strength
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Southern Poverty Law Center
The AIDS Institute
The Praxis Project
The Workers Circle
Trust for America’s Health
Truth Initiative
UnidosUS
Vaccinate Your Family

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CDC Announces $2.25 Billion to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities in Communities that are at High-Risk and Underserved | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC March 18, 2021. (accessed March 18, 2021).