



December 15, 2020

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), its HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) and its George W. Counts Interest Group, **we strongly urge you to ensure passage of COVID-19 response legislation before the end of the year, particularly including resources urgently needed to support widespread, equitable distribution, allocation and administration of COVID-19 vaccines.** The bipartisan proposal released on December 14 represents critical progress, though additional resources will likely be necessary. IDSA and HIVMA represent over 12,000 infectious diseases physicians, scientists and other public health and health care professionals on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. IDSA's George W. Counts Interest Group is comprised of Black/African American infectious diseases physicians who are committed to advancing health and systemic equity.

COVID-19 vaccines represent a critical source of hope for eradicating the pandemic that has already killed more than 300,000 people in the United States, with a significant disproportionate impact on African American/Black, Latinx and indigenous individuals. Longstanding systemic inequities place these populations at a far greater risk of contracting and dying from COVID-19. These inequities also pose barriers to accessing health care services that must be addressed to ensure successful uptake of COVID-19 vaccines and prevent a worsening of health disparities.

Funding is critical for successful vaccine distribution, allocation and administration, including funding to support the workforce necessary for a successful vaccination campaign, tracking, cold supply chain management, and efforts to increase access, particularly among African American/Black, Latinx and indigenous individuals. It is equally essential to fund educational efforts to help build and restore trust and boost vaccine confidence in partnership with community-based organizations that have longstanding public trust and relationships with the communities heavily impacted by COVID-19, including HIV organizations. A November 2020 Gallup poll found that only 58% of Americans overall, and only 48% of non-white Americans, are willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

We support the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for allocating initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccines and emphasize that ACIP's continued guidance will be essential as new vaccines are authorized or licensed and greater vaccine supply is made available. We also encourage congressional oversight of vaccine distribution, allocation and administration to ensure equity and accountability and to identify and address any additional needs for federal funding, coordination, guidance or support.

As the number of people infected and hospitalized with COVID-19 continues to surge, we are months away from broad availability of vaccines. We appreciate that the bipartisan proposal under

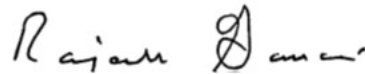
consideration includes resources to support not only vaccination, but also other elements of our COVID-19 response, including testing capacity, contact tracing and support for individuals suffering financial hardships due to the pandemic.

We appreciate your attention to our nation's immediate needs and look forward to continuing to work with you to improve our current response and our preparedness for future health threats, and we emphasize that promoting health equity must be central to these efforts.

Sincerely,



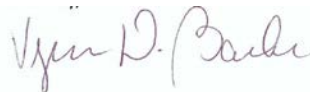
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