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February 8, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chair
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chair Pallone, and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Thank you for your continued focus on the COVID-19 crisis. Our communities continue to grapple with the public health and economic effects of the pandemic, and we must do all we can to beat the virus and help our constituents and their families during this difficult time. I am deeply concerned, however, that communities of color and other underserved communities are being left behind in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. That's why I'm asking you to include in the next COVID-19 package at least \$16.5 billion for vaccination access efforts—including a \$1 billion awareness campaign—and at least \$12 billion for community health centers, all which were included in President Biden's American Rescue Plan, and to partner in these efforts with the community health centers and local organizations best able to ensure every individual has an opportunity to receive a vaccine.

At the backbone of stopping this pandemic in underserved communities is continuing to support community health centers (CHCs). CHCs serve more than 29 million people in the United States and have tested more than 8 million patients for COVID-19.¹ More than half of those who have received COVID-19 vaccinations at CHCs are people of color, and CHCs sometimes serve as the only option for testing and health care in a community. That's why I urge you to include \$12 billion in additional resources for CHCs to continue this work providing vaccinations and health care to our neighbors who need it most.

¹ <https://www.nachc.org/research-and-data/research-fact-sheets-and-infographics/infographics-national-findings-on-health-centers-response-to-covid-19/>

To build on the work CHCs have done and to ensure doses are available in all parts of the country and to all groups of individuals, I urge you to include at least \$15.5 billion for CHCs, pharmacies (including independent pharmacies), and local organizations to deploy community vaccination clinics in underserved communities and ensure mobile vaccination units are available to go to the people and places with few or no other options, such as places with transportation challenges, rural areas, and to individuals with disabilities. This effort will only be successful if vaccine doses go directly to trusted partners in the communities. By pairing national-level coordination and resources of the federal government with the deep understanding of the community that local partners have, we'll truly reach every corner of and every individual in America.

The final partner in this process are individuals willing to be vaccinated. We know the problem: a legacy of government and medical establishments mistreating people of color has resulted in 43% of Black Americans wanting to “wait and see” how the COVID-19 vaccines work on other people before taking it, and two-thirds of Black adults say they don't have enough information about the side effects or the effectiveness of the vaccines.² In addition to lack of information, is misinformation: more than half of Black and Hispanic adults are concerned they might get COVID-19 from the vaccines, for example. Community organizations who currently serve communities of color are already doing the work listening to concerns, understanding fears, and talking with individuals about why—for most people—the benefit of vaccinations outweighs the risk. But this effort takes time and resources, and that's why I urge you to include \$1 billion for a comprehensive vaccination awareness and education campaign. This campaign should include a national media campaign, targeted outreach to groups using trusted messengers and messages, and local efforts, including grants to community organizations that are already trusted in and are part of the community they serve.

Just as the successful vaccine candidates were built on years of investment, a similar commitment is needed to ensure a successful COVID-19 vaccine education and administration effort. Communities nationwide are stepping up to ensure no individual is left behind in this effort; Congress must provide the resources to support that work.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ami Bera". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress

² <https://www.kff.org/report-section/kff-covid-19-vaccine-monitor-january-2021-vaccine-hesitancy/>