

April 23, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader of the Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader of the Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader of the House of
Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office
Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Biden, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned organizations extend our appreciation to the White House for its leadership on the American Rescue Plan, and to those in Congress who voted to make crucial investments in a legislative package that is worthy of meeting the moment for COVID-19 relief. The American Rescue Plan is already improving the lives of millions of Americans – expanding affordable health coverage to individuals with low incomes, reducing child poverty, investing in ways to address social determinants of health, lifting up the health care workforce, and committing significant resources toward ending the pandemic. And while we are grateful for these advancements, we know you share our understanding that they do not ultimately address the fundamental weaknesses in our health care system that made us more vulnerable to the pandemic and, more broadly, produce such poor population health outcomes in the United States. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that every person in our communities has a stake in all of our health and access to health care. But families across America are still falling through the cracks without permanent solutions that provide support to at-risk populations to access basic health care and achieve good health in an affordable way.

With the goal of “building back better”, additional recovery packages currently under development provide a historic opportunity that may not come again for decades. This effort comes in the wake of a pandemic in which Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, American Indian and rural communities suffered grossly disproportionate mortality, and in which the number of uninsured people in a community was highly correlated with the number of deaths and hospitalizations from COVID-19. This is the price we have paid for our nation’s demonstrable health care inequities, and we will continue to pay that price unless you take bold steps now to fix our broken system. This recovery package must be a transformational health care bill, and that transformation must be centered in equity and deliver on true affordability, coverage, and system change for all of America’s families and individuals. The following core values are critical to this endeavor.

First, health care is at the center of our country’s infrastructure and must be built back better. Healthy individuals, families, and workers are key to realizing our full potential for national growth and

development, resilient communities, and a thriving economy. In line with putting forward a strong health package, we recognize that other elements of recovery – such as the provision of tax credits and housing provisions for vulnerable populations – all help drive our country toward a healthy economy and overall health and well-being for people. And when investments are focused on our health care infrastructure that also creates stable jobs and local economies. With the historic opportunity to put forward a more just and equitable recovery effort, Congress and the White House must prioritize health care in this upcoming package.

Second, any recovery legislation must prioritize inclusive policies that guarantee access to, and facilitate easy enrollment in, affordable health coverage regardless of age, income, disability, race/ethnicity, language spoken, immigration status, sex, gender identity or sexual orientation, or where someone lives. We've seen how COVID-19 cases and fatalities are linked to coverage rates down to the county-level, and how important it is to eliminate gaps to coverage and care for preventing spread of disease and suffering. Building upon and making permanent the American Rescue Plan's improvements to financial assistance for marketplace coverage, allowing immigrants to access care through Medicaid and the marketplace, providing affordable coverage for those who experienced job loss, and ensuring the Medicare program invests in crucial benefits are all paramount to building back better. Simply put, a future package must prioritize ensuring coverage for the uninsured and under-insured. Any proposals without serious investment in the coverage gap will fall short in realizing the ideals of "building back better."

Third, recovery legislation must contain targeted action to address the pre-existing health and economic inequities that led to the pandemic's disproportionate impact on communities of color, LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, older adults, and every intersection thereof. Building back better cannot coexist with the ways systemic racism impacts health care and economic stability – a system built on white supremacy/racism and misogyny. It's time to make lasting system change that prioritizes the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) by investing in workforce and caregiving infrastructure – including taking impactful action to curb the ongoing maternal health crisis including mandating nationwide Medicaid coverage for 12 months postpartum, robust support of Home and Community Based Services, investments in the health care safety net, and adding additional covered services in Medicaid to support parents and young children.

Fourth, prescription drug pricing is a significant driver of health inequities. The White House and Congress must take this moment to end industry abuses and finally act to lower the price of prescription drugs by allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with pharmaceutical manufacturers. Particularly for BIPOC, rural, and low-income communities, higher rates of chronic conditions like diabetes have left countless families to assume the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs with little relief or end in sight. We must seize this opportunity to finally carry forward long-standing policy solutions thwarted by the pharmaceutical industry at the expense of consumers and patients struggling to make ends meet. America's families want bold action on prescription drug reforms and lasting protections from industry abuses, and anything short of Medicare drug negotiation will fail to meet this moment.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing solutions that will support a more resilient, stronger America for today and future generations. Our organizations stand ready to support you in furtherance of these core values and policy solutions.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

ACA Consumer Advocacy
ACASignups.net
Allergy & Asthma Network
American Association of Birth Centers
American Federation of Teachers
American Medical Student Association
American Public Health Association
Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
Breast Cancer Action
Be A Hero
CASA
Center for American Progress
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Children's HealthWatch
Children's Trust Fund Alliance
Church World Service
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Catalyst
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Families USA
First Focus on Children
Food Research & Action Center
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
Health Care Voices
Ipas
Justice in Aging
Little Lobbyists
Long Term Care Community Coalition
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
NAACP
NASTAD
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Birth Equity Collaborative

National Council of Jewish Women
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Urban League
National Women's Health Network
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
People's Action
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Power to Decide
Primary Care Development Corporation
Progressive Doctors
Protect Our Care
R2H Action
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
RESULTS
SEIU
Small Business Majority
Treatment Action Group
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
Young Invincibles

Alabama

AIDS Alabama
Alabama Arise

Alaska

Alaska Primary Care Association

Arizona

Arizona Oral Health Coalition
Children's Action Alliance

California

Asian Resources, Inc
Brighter Beginnings
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN)
Equality California

Health Access California
Looms for Lupus
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
The Children's Partnership
Venice Family Clinic

Colorado

Center for Health Progress
Colorado Children's Campaign
Colorado Consumer Health Initiative
Colorado Latino Leadership Advocacy and
Research Organization

Connecticut

National Association of Social Workers, CT
Chapter
Universal Health Care Foundation of
Connecticut

Florida

Catalyst Miami
Faithful Hearts Academy
Florida Health Justice Project
Florida Policy Institute

Georgia

Feminist Women's Health Center
Georgia Equality
Georgians for a Healthy Future

Idaho

Centro de Comunidad y Justicia

Iowa

Common Good Iowa

Illinois

AIDS Foundation Chicago
Associates in Psychological Services Ltd
Enlace Chicago
Erie Family Health Centers
EverThrive Illinois
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Mano a Mano Family Resource Center
Protect Our Care Illinois
Shriver Center on Poverty Law

Kansas

Community Care Network of Kansas
Community Health Council of Wyandotte
County
Kansas Action for Children
Kansas Appleseed
Women for Kansas

Kentucky

Kentucky Voices for Health

Louisiana

Louisiana Primary Care Association

Maine

Maine Equal Justice
Maine People's Alliance

Maryland

High Note Consulting, LLC
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative Education
Fund, Inc.
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative

Massachusetts

Health Care for All
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee
Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)
Massachusetts Senior Action Council
Personal Disability Consulting, Inc.

Michigan

Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
Michigan League for Public Policy

Minnesota

TakeAction Minnesota

Missouri

Missouri Budget Project

Nebraska

Nebraska Appleseed

Nevada

Children's Advocacy Alliance
Silver State Equality

New Hampshire

Granite State Progress
New Futures
NH Conference United Church of Christ
Economic Justice Mission Group

New Jersey

BlueWaveNJ
New Jersey Citizen Action

New Mexico

Health Action New Mexico
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
OLÉ Education Fund

New York

African Services Committee
Center for Elder Law & Justice
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Empire Justice Center
Harlem United
Health and Welfare Council of Long Island
Health Foundation for Western and Central
New York
Kingsbay YM-YWHA
Long Island Center for Independent Living, Inc.
(LICIL)
Make the Road New York
Medicaid Advocates
Medicaid Matters New York
Metro New York Health Care for All
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)
New York Self-Determination Coalition
New York State Adult Day Services Association
NYAPRS.org
Rise and Resist
Sundance SADC
Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project

North Carolina

NC Child
North Carolina AIDS Action Network

Ohio

UHCAN Ohio

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Policy Institute

Oregon

ONA
Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation of Oregon

Pennsylvania

Casa San Jose
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Health Access Network

Rhode Island

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition Rhode Island

South Carolina

South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center

Tennessee

Lee Insurance Agency
Tennessee Disability Coalition
Tennessee Health Care Campaign
Tennessee Justice Center

Texas

Children's Defense Fund - Texas
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Every Texan (formerly CPPP)
Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas,
Inc.
Proyecto Azteca
Texas Parent to Parent

Utah

Utah Health Policy Project

Vermont

Office of the Health Care Advocate

Virginia

VACIL Virginia Association of Centers for
Independent Living
Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation
Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations
Virginia Counselors Association
Virginia Health Catalyst
Virginia Organizing
Virginia Poverty Law Center

Washington

Economic Opportunity Institute
Northwest Harvest
Northwest Health Law Advocates
SYL Foundation

West Virginia

Morgantown NOW
TEAM for WV Children
Think Kids
West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
WV FREE

Wisconsin

Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Kids Forward
Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice