



March 26, 2021

Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Jeffrey Zients
Coronavirus Response Coordinator
White House

CC: Francis Collins, Director, National Institutes of Health; Rochelle Walensky, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dear Secretary Becerra and Counselor Zients:

On behalf of the National Academy of Medicine (NAM)/National Academies Committee on a Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine, we thank the Biden administration for its decisive efforts to equitably allocate and distribute vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 among the American people. We also thank the administration for its attention to the global response to SARS-CoV-2 and its commitment to restore the U.S. role in global health governance and coordination. In particular, we celebrate the administration's decision to restore the United States to full participation as a member of the World Health Organization and its \$4 billion commitment to the COVAX Facility maintained by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Both of these actions were recommended in the [*Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine*](#) report.

We are writing to you today to highlight a third recommendation from our report, which we believe constitutes a critical and urgent opportunity for the United States to fully reclaim its status as a global health leader – the immediate allocation of a percentage of the U.S. COVID-19 vaccine supply for distribution through COVAX to countries in need. Our report recommends an initial allocation of 10 percent, to be donated immediately, but the commitment should be ongoing and informed by global need. Such action is critical to build solidarity and strengthen international bonds, which will enhance the response to SARS-CoV-2 and foster resilience against future pandemics and other global emergencies. Although the United States has donated vaccines to Mexico and Canada, global equity requires us to look beyond our immediate neighbors.

The moment to make this allocation is now – not months from now. Earlier this month, President Biden estimated that the United States will have enough vaccine to inoculate the entire adult population by the end of May 2021 – two months earlier than previous projections. The introduction of the Johnson & Johnson single-shot vaccine, and the possibility that the AstraZeneca vaccine may soon be available in the United States under an Emergency Use Authorization, mean that the U.S. vaccine supply will quickly outpace the demand.

If the Biden administration were to pledge a portion of this supply for global allocation now, it would send an important signal to other nations that investment in global health equity must be part of first-line pandemic response, not an afterthought. On the other hand, the decision to wait until U.S. vaccination

targets are fully met would set a nationalistic precedent that could discourage generosity by other nations, now and in times of future need. Let us be clear: the success of global SARS-CoV-2 vaccination will depend entirely on the leadership and investment of wealthy nations. The United States should be leading this charge.

There is a practical reason for this investment, as well as a moral and political one. Speeding the vaccination of populations around the world is fundamental to controlling the COVID-19 pandemic within our own borders. The truth of this statement is evident in the impact of SARS-CoV-2 variants from Brazil, South Africa, and elsewhere in regions across the United States. Every day, leaders are asked when life will return to normal in our country. The answer is: not until life returns to normal everywhere else. This is an important opportunity to educate the American people about the fragility and interconnectedness of our shared global health.

In closing, we urge the Biden administration to immediately allocate a portion of the U.S. COVID-19 vaccine supply to support equitable global distribution through COVAX. Doing so would not only protect the American people, but also cement the United States' return to global health leadership in the eyes of the world.

The NAM and members of the Committee on a Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine would be pleased to support the Biden administration in this effort.

Sincerely,

Victor Dzau, President, National Academy of Medicine

William Foege, Emeritus Distinguished Professor of International Health, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University (Co-Chair, *Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine*)

Helene Gayle, President & CEO, Chicago Community Trust (Co-Chair, *Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine*)

Attachments:

- [Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [“America Could – and Should – Vaccinate the World”](#)