

February 11, 2021

The Honorable Joseph Biden  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader of the Senate  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader of the Senate  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

Our nation faces an historic set of challenges but also an historic opportunity to greatly improve the lives of struggling families in America. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) not only exposed the problems with our health care system, it has also given us a blueprint for the change that is needed. As the new Administration and Congress set agendas for the coming year, the undersigned organizations urge you to prioritize comprehensive relief legislation that makes substantial progress toward public health, access to health care, and a more just and responsive health system.

In particular, we urge you to ensure that policy proposals advanced in the coming weeks and months adhere to the following principles:

**1. Our health care systems must deliver high quality care for everyone.**

No one in America should face barriers to care because of who we are, where we come from, where we live, what language we speak, or how we identify. Our leaders must take bold action to address disparities and improve the way our nation delivers and pays for health care, especially for the communities hit hardest by the pandemic.

The stark disparities in COVID-19 impacts exposed the devastating effect of long-standing racial injustice on Black, Indigenous and other people of color. The Biden Administration and 117<sup>th</sup> Congress have a responsibility to respond. A COVID-19 package offers an opportunity for both parties to show their commitment to address existing health disparities by enacting policies that ensure communities of color do not suffer massive and disproportionate mortality and illness ever again. The Biden Administration and Congress must develop policies that include the following elements in order to make serious progress towards health equity:

- Immediately prioritize equity in all COVID-19 relief policies, especially in addressing stark racial, ethnic and disability inequities. This includes ensuring the allocation, distribution, and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines is equitable and accessible.
- Address the devastating maternal mortality crisis and the roots of racial disparities among prenatal and postpartum mothers and in childhood.
- Recognize the central role of social drivers in health inequities and enact comprehensive reforms and investments across systems; not only health care but also criminal justice, environmental safety, business opportunity and workplace empowerment, economic justice, housing, and other sectors critical to health and wellness.
- Invest in culturally-competent, diverse, team-based care and a robust community-based health workforce, incorporating these key dimensions of care into payment and delivery systems.
- Ensure that our nation's frontline workers who have been courageous heroes during this pandemic have access to worker protections and to comprehensive health insurance, regardless of income, geography, or immigration status.
- Prioritize support for people that are suffering disproportionately under this pandemic, including families in rural America, the elderly, BIPOC families, immigrants, Tribal Nations, people with disabilities, and people receiving home and community based services or residing in congregate living settings.

**2. Every child, every family, every older adult in this country must have access to high-quality, affordable health care and shouldn't face financial ruin if they need care. Our health should not depend on our wealth.**

COVID-19 created a devastating economic crisis, causing tens of millions of individuals to lose their jobs, financial security, and employer-sponsored health insurance. No one in this country should ever have to worry that they can't afford health care or have to choose between filling a prescription and paying their rent or mortgage. This crisis is a tragic reminder that it is long past time for our country to provide its people with universal coverage, as every other advanced country does. Critical to achieving that goal the Biden Administration and Congress must:

- Build on the foundation of the Affordable Care Act by improving the affordability of coverage provided in the Marketplace; extending subsidies to reach even more people; streamlining enrollment policies and bolstering consumer assistance to make it easier and more automatic for families eligible for coverage to enroll; and taking swift action to defend the law and the millions of families who rely on it from politically-motivated lawsuits.
- Expand Medicaid coverage so that it is available for more people who cannot afford healthcare for themselves or their families and allow all people to buy into a public coverage option if they prefer it to private health insurance.
- Improve Medicare and Medicaid to fully meet the needs of our nation's older adults and people with disabilities including coverage of oral health, vision, and hearing services as fundamental benefits under the traditional Medicare program as well as investments in Medicaid home and community-based services.

**3. Our health care system must be reformed to center patients’ and families’ needs, not profits for huge health corporations that leave consumers footing the bill.**

Our health care system is the most expensive in the world and yet often provides low-quality and low-value care. It does not reward innovation. It does not reward community prevention and public health. Instead, the way we pay for and regulate health care rewards corporate behavior that drives profits at the expense of our families’ health. Consumers have long paid the price in unaffordable care, excessive prescription drug prices and insurance premiums, and in rushed medical visits and missed diagnoses. In 2020 they paid a further price as our health system failed to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Biden Administration and Congress have an opportunity to fix these perverse incentives by:

- Taking bold action to address industry abuses, including allowing the government to negotiate drug prices on behalf of our nation’s families and making sure that newly-enacted surprise medical bill protections are implemented strongly and effectively.
- Encouraging innovation rather than manipulation of intellectual property for financial gain.
- Putting people ahead of profits by reducing the rewards for health care industry consolidation.
- Better supporting primary care and creating accountability for quality, equity, patient satisfaction and improving people’s health, within the Medicare program and across our system.

The greatness of a nation can be measured by how it handles adversity. Our organizations stand ready to support you in putting this country back on the path to true health and financial wellness, in 2021 and beyond.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations**

Families USA	National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
ACA signups	National Association of Social Workers
Medicare Rights Center	National Birth Equity Collaborative
MomsRising	National Black Gay Men’s Advocacy Coalition
NAACP	National Black Justice Coalition
NASTAD	National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health	National Center on Adoption and Permanency
National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics	National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
	National Consumers League

National Council of Jewish Women  
National Crittenton  
National Dental Association  
National Immigration Law Center  
National League for Nursing  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Respite Coalition  
National Working Positive Coalition  
OCA — Asian Pacific American Advocates  
OCA Sacramento Chapter  
OCA-FC  
PFLAG National  
Positive Women's Network-USA  
Prevent Blindness  
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator (Viatorians)  
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)  
Rebuilding Independence My Style  
RESULTS  
Santa Fe Group  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
Treatment Action Group  
Triage Cancer  
Union for Reform Judaism

United States People living with HIV Caucus  
United Way Worldwide  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity  
ZERO TO THREE

### **State Organizations**

#### **Alabama**

AIDS Alabama

#### **Arkansas**

Arkansas Community Organizations

#### **Arizona**

Asian Pacific Community in Action

Children's Action Alliance

OCA-Greater Phoenix Chapter

Unlimited Potential

#### **California**

Blue Sky

California Health Advocates (CHA)

Central Valley Urban Institute

Community Health Partnership

CPEHN

CRLA Foundation

Dientes Community Dental Care

Equality California

Looms for Lupus

Plunum Health

San Francisco AIDS Foundation

The Children's Partnership

Westside Family Health Center

Venice Family Clinic

**Colorado**

Colorado Children's Campaign

Colorado Consumer Health Initiative

Colorado School Medicaid Consortium

**Coneticut**

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut

**Florida**

Asian American Federation of Florida

Democratic Disability Caucus of Florida

Disability Independence Group, Inc.

Florida Asian Services

Florida Asian Women Alliance

OCA South Florida Chapter

Florida Voices for Health

**Georgia**

Morehouse School of Medicine

Prevent Blindness Georgia

Soft Smiles, LLC

**Iowa**

Coasap

**Illinois**

AIDS Foundation Chicago

AUSET- Intelligent Strategies Innovative Solutions (ISIS)

EverThrive IL

Heartland Alliance

Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness

OCA Greater Chicago

Shriver Center on Poverty Law

**Kansas**

Community Health Council of Wyandotte County

**Kentucky**

Kentucky Equal Justice Center

Kentucky Voices for Health

**Massachusetts**

Personal Disability Consulting, Inc.

**Maryland**

Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services, Inc.

Maryland Dental Action Coalition

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence - Maryland

Chapter

OCA-DC

Public Justice Center

SPACeS in Action

**Maine**

Maine Equal Justice

**Michigan**

Community Housing Network, Inc.

Urban Health Outreach

**Missouri**

Community Housing Network, Inc.

Missouri Coalition for Oral Health

**Minnesota**

Apple Tree Dental

Children's Dental Services

Southern Heights Dental Group

**Missouri**

Missouri Coalition for Oral Health

**Mississippi**

Mississippi Center for Justice

**North Carolina**

Epilepsy Alliance North Carolina

NC Child

North Carolina AIDS Action Network

**North Dakota**

Family Voices of ND

**Nebraska**

Nebraska Appleseed

**New Jersey**

New Jersey Citizen Action

**Nevada**

Silver State Equality-Nevada

**New York**

Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

Medicaid Matters New York

Metro New York Health Care for All

**Ohio**

OCA Greater Cleveland - Asian Pacific American Advocates

Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund

Ohio Council of Churches

**Oklahoma**

Oklahoma Policy Institute

**Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Philadelphia Health Partnership

Women's Law Project

**Rhode Island**

Sista FIRE

**South Carolina**

Palmetto Project InsureSC

S.C. Appleseed Legal Justice Center

**Tennessee**

Nashville Jewish Social Justice Roundtable

**Texas**

Human Rights Initiative of North Texas

Indivedual

OCA-Greater Houston

Reflection International Ministries

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hidalgo County

**Utah**

Utah Health Policy Project

**Virginia**

PWF Consulting

Virginia Health Catalyst

Virginia Organizing

**Vermont**

Office of the Health Care Advocate, Vermont Legal Aid

**Washington**

Sheng-Yen Lu Foundation (SYL Foundation)

**Wisconsin**

Prevent Blindness Wisconsin

The Eau Claire Healthwatch Coalition

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

**West Virginia**

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care