

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
Minority (202) 225-3641

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients  
COVID-19 Response Coordinator  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Zients:

I write to request an update on the nationwide coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination efforts. I commend the Biden Administration for the swift actions it has taken to accelerate the administration of vaccines and to bolster our fight against COVID-19. My top priority is to combat this pandemic, and I intend to pursue an aggressive oversight and legislative agenda to ensure that the nation has the tools and resources necessary to crush this horrific virus.

Last year, I called on the Trump Administration repeatedly to develop a comprehensive national COVID-19 vaccine plan beyond the Operation Warp Speed (OWS) framework.<sup>1</sup> They never did. We witnessed the results of the lack of a thorough plan in the early weeks of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign as reports of confusion rolled-in from across the country.<sup>2</sup> That is why I was so heartened to see a comprehensive national COVID-19 strategy released on the second day of the Biden Administration.<sup>3</sup>

Two safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines are available, and additional vaccines are likely on the way. This is a testament to the investments made by Congress, the contributions of career scientists and experts in the federal government, and the ingenuity of the manufacturing companies involved in these historic efforts. Your efforts to develop and manage the initial shipments of COVID-19 vaccines are laudable.

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<sup>1</sup> House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Committee Activity: Covid-19 Response* (energycommerce.house.gov/covid-19-responses) (accessed on Feb. 10, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> *Coronavirus vaccine has arrived, but frustrated Americans are struggling to sign up*, Washington Post (Jan. 3, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> *Biden unveils national COVID strategy with slate of executive orders*, CBS News (Jan. 21, 2021).

According to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the White House Chief Medical Advisor and the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health, in order to turn the corner on the pandemic, 70-85 percent of Americans must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.<sup>4</sup> Yet nearly two months after the first vaccine was authorized, less than three percent of Americans have been fully vaccinated.<sup>5</sup> Also, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the limited data available shows that Black and Hispanic people are being vaccinated against COVID-19 at lower rates than white people in the United States, despite facing significantly higher rates of infection, hospitalization, and death.<sup>6</sup>

Last week, state health officials and other experts testified before the Energy and Commerce Committee on the challenges that have hamstrung the country's vaccination campaign, including efforts to ensure equitable access to the vaccines. Some of the key issues raised were: the demand for vaccines outpacing supply, lack of coordination and opaque communication, reporting limitations, and data platform confusion.<sup>7</sup> Witnesses also stressed the need for greater investments in vaccine distribution and our supply chain.<sup>8</sup>

I am pleased the Biden Administration is already working to address these challenges and has taken bold steps to increase the COVID-19 vaccination rate. In addition to the national strategy, President Biden has already issued ten COVID-19 response executive orders.<sup>9</sup> Further, the Biden Administration increased states' vaccine dose allocation projections from one to three weeks, bolstered their vaccine supply by 28 percent, and will begin shipping doses directly to community health centers next week.<sup>10</sup> The Administration also purchased 200 million more doses that will be available this summer, bringing the federal government's total purchase to 600

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<sup>4</sup> 70% to 85% of Americans need to be fully vaccinated for a return to normal, Fauci says. So far it's less than 2%, CNN (Feb. 3, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *COVID Data Tracker: Vaccinations in the US* ([covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations)) (accessed Feb. 10, 2021); U.S. Census Bureau, *U.S. and World Population Clock* ([www.census.gov/popclock/](https://www.census.gov/popclock/)) (accessed Feb. 10, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Demographic Characteristics of Persons Vaccinated During the First Month of the COVID-19 Vaccination Program — United States, December 14, 2020–January 14, 2021* (Feb. 5, 2021) (MMWR 70(5); 174-177).

<sup>7</sup> House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Hearing on No Time to Lose: Solutions to Increase COVID-19 Vaccinations in the States*, 117th Cong. (Feb. 2, 2021); House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Hearing on Road to Recovery: Ramping Up COVID-19 Vaccines, Testing, and Medical Supply Chain*, 117th Cong. (Feb. 3, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> See note 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Biden administration seeks to buy 200 million more vaccine doses, to be delivered through the summer*, Washington Post (Jan. 26, 2021); *Biden administration boosting vaccine supply to states, community health centers*, NBC News (Feb. 9, 2021).

million doses of authorized COVID-19 vaccines.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the Administration has proposed the American Rescue Plan, which would invest \$20 billion to speed the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines—including resources to reach marginalized communities and promoting the safety and efficacy of authorized vaccines.<sup>12</sup>

I am encouraged that many of these actions align with the suggestions from state health leaders and echo the solutions other experts shared with the Committee. I look forward to working with the Biden Administration to support the equitable acceleration of COVID-19 vaccinations in the United States as we fight together to end this pandemic. To that end, my Committee has crafted legislation to implement the American Rescue Plan, which will be marked up later this week. As the Committee considers this and other legislation and furthers its continued oversight of the federal government's pandemic response, I request a briefing and responses to the following questions by February 25, 2021.

1. Given the lack of a comprehensive national COVID-19 vaccine plan by the Trump Administration, what was the state of COVID-19 vaccine distribution, administration, and provider and public education when the Biden Administration took over activities related to the COVID-19 vaccine campaign? How, if at all, did the delay in transition activities and the state of the plans inherited by the Biden Administration impact the timeline for vaccinating Americans?
2. What are the current status and future projections of the manufacturing capabilities and availability of each authorized and anticipated COVID-19 vaccine? Have the manufacturing capabilities or availability of each authorized or anticipated COVID-19 vaccine been subject to any delays or barriers? Please provide the same information for production of ancillary supplies, including all materials required for production of the vaccine, supplies needed for the accompanying vaccination kits, and any medical supplies necessary for providers to safely administer the vaccines.
3. How frequently does the Biden Administration intend to update information regarding the current status and future projections of the manufacturing capability and availability of each authorized and anticipated COVID-19 vaccine and will the Biden Administration make the information available to the public? If so, in what format will this information be released?
4. What additional steps to expand production capacity, if any, does the Administration plan to take to increase the supply of COVID-19 vaccines and ancillary supplies to make them available as quickly as possible to states, localities, territories, Tribes, providers, and the American people?

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<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *What to Know About Biden's \$1.9 Trillion 'American Rescue Plan'*, New York Times (Jan. 14, 2021).

5. When will the COVID-19 public dashboard, as outlined in President Biden's national strategy, be published, and what specific data will be included? What other steps is the Administration taking to increase transparency with state, local, territorial, and Tribal health officials, Congress, and the American people regarding the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines?
6. What specific actions has the Biden Administration taken or does it intend to take to improve the communication and coordination of COVID-19 vaccination efforts across all levels of government, including with state, local, territorial, and Tribal health departments, and with providers, to expedite the equitable administration of vaccines?
7. When will the Administration launch the COVID-19 vaccine national public education campaign as outlined in its national strategy? To what extent are state, local, territorial, and Tribal leaders or other stakeholders engaged in this process?
8. What steps has the Biden Administration taken or does it intend to take to address challenges raised with regard to data infrastructure, technological platforms, and digital tools utilized by the federal government and other jurisdictions—such as for the ordering, allocation, distribution, scheduling, safety monitoring, and reporting of COVID-19 vaccines and vaccinations across the country?
9. What actions has the Administration taken or does it plan to take to encourage and support providers and jurisdictions' timely and complete reporting of demographic and other information, including race and ethnicity data, of those who have received a COVID-19 vaccine?

Thank you for your prompt attention. If you have any questions, and to schedule the briefing, please contact Jesseca Boyer and Stephen Holland with the Majority Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman