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The Honorable Francis Collins
Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

The Honorable Anthony S. Fauci
Director
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
5601 Fishers Ln
Rockville, MD 20852

August 25, 2020

Dear Director Collins and Director Fauci,

I want to first thank you for your tireless work to ensure that we win the fight against COVID-19. This insidious virus is not only a public health crisis, but also a crisis that is having devastating consequences on our economy. Due to the urgent nature of this pandemic, it is vitally important that we develop effective treatments and vaccines to minimize the virus' impact and ultimately eradicate it. While I am encouraged about the progress of vaccine development for COVID-19, including the Moderna vaccine which has entered phase 3 trials, I am concerned that those living in underserved communities, especially communities of color, will not be able to easily participate in these trials. I strongly urge you to consider an additional site in Los Angeles closer to and more accessible for my demographically diverse constituents – representing populations that are desperately needed to participate in these trials.

The COVID-19 crisis affects all of us, but it is the latest disease to infect and kill communities of color at higher rates than people in the rest of the population. When conducting clinical trials for treatments and vaccines for COVID-19, there needs to be an emphasis to ensure that those who are participating in the trials are racially diverse, so that there are not any disparities in terms of the effectiveness of the treatment. However, for those who are low-income and living in underserved communities there can be severe limitations, such as limited access to public transportation, which impact their ability to participate in these trials.

That is why I was particularly concerned when I saw the list of sites for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine trial. I noticed that there is only one site in Los Angeles located at the UCLA Vine Street Clinic in Hollywood. This site is far from the majority-minority communities I represent and will severely limit the ability of my constituents to participate in the trials. Given the demographics of my district, this lack of access to participate in the trials will greatly affect

the potential diversity of the trial participants. Many of my constituents are low-income people of color who deserve the same access to this trial as those in more affluent communities.

These concerns were raised during a briefing you held with members of the Congressional TriCaucus and Native American Caucus, and I was grateful that you acknowledged the issue. However, I wish to follow-up to request additional information regarding the process used in determining the location of these COVID-19 vaccine trial sites. This includes steps being taken to ensure that communities of color are able to easily participate, as well as any plans on establishing additional sites, and where those sites will be located.

The only way to decisively defeat COVID-19 is to guarantee that every American, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, has access to the full range of treatments, and that these treatments have been proven safe and effective. I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that we win this fight.

Sincerely,



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress