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Congress of the United States
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February 9, 2021

Mark Ghaly, MD, MPH
Secretary, California Health & Human
Services Agency
1600 Ninth Street, Room 460
Sacramento, CA 95814

Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd
Director, LA County Department of Public Health
Office of Communications and Public Affairs
313 N. Figueroa Street, Room 806
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Secretary Ghaly and Director Ferrer:

We write to you with great concern regarding the recent rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations in the communities we represent. Before the pandemic began, historically underserved communities were already facing worse health outcomes than other Californians. Then, when COVID-19 swept through L.A. County and our nation, we immediately learned that Black and Latino communities were being infected with COVID-19 at higher rates than other communities and that COVID-19 was more lethal within communities of color.

While our hardworking healthcare professionals stand ready to help vaccinate our community, we encourage you to develop a plan to ensure that our most susceptible populations become a priority. Even over the short time period that adults 65 and over have become eligible for the vaccine, we are concerned to already see enormous disparities, trending along racial lines, on who is receiving these limited vaccine appointments. There also needs to be more vaccination sites available on the weekends and after work hours to help essential workers and eligible people access the vaccines who are trying to support and take care of their families.

First, there were clearly inequities in access to testing, as COVID testing was not widely available in Black, Latino, Native Hawaiian, Asian American and Pacific Islanders communities in our districts. According to Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science data, collected from a temporary testing site in the Watts-Willowbrook community showed that more than 30 percent of the nearly 30,000 residents tested did not have a primary care medical home – the places where they would be likely to both get tested and receive the vaccines.

In South Los Angeles, 17.8 percent of residents don't have health insurance, and 32.5 percent report difficulty accessing medical care. Many of these residents rely on their community health

centers for medical services – clinics which have not yet received vaccinations for their most vulnerable patients. Without immediate action addressing systemic barriers to vaccines, we will continue to witness adverse health outcomes and deaths related to COVID-19 infection.

Given Governor Newsom's expressed intent to amplify the rate of vaccinations statewide and L.A. County's initial intent to distribute vaccinations to the most impacted zip codes, we are respectfully requesting data to reflect these intentions. We would like to request data from your agencies which will include but not be limited to race/ethnicity, age, and occupation of those who have received the vaccine during the initial phases of the rollout.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to address this important issue.

Sincerely,



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

/s/ Karen Bass
Member of Congress

/s/ Ted Lieu
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/ Judy Chu
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress