

July 10, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We, the undersigned organizations, are committed to working with you, the Administration and Congress to meet the continued needs of the American public as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Together we represent millions of individuals working to address the unprecedented challenges the pandemic has presented to our society, our healthcare system, and our economy.

As such, we are writing to urge you to renew the current public health emergency (PHE) declaration for **at least** an additional 90 days before it expires on July 25. It is imperative that the federal government continue to deploy all resources and authorities necessary to protect the public and assist states and localities as they continue to respond to this urgent situation. As of the date of this letter, many states and localities are still experiencing dramatic increases in SARS-CoV-2 infections and hospitalizations due to COVID-19. At the same time, these areas are preparing for seasonal threats such as hurricanes, wildfires, influenza and more. We cannot afford to ease up on our response to this grave threat.

Furthermore, maintaining the PHE status is required if we are to increase the pace of research on SARS-CoV-2, accelerate development of medical countermeasures, streamline efforts to bring novel diagnostics, vaccine candidates and therapeutic options to market, and ensure that the public has access to health care and other social services.

In addition to the fact that it helps guard against complacency from the public while the threat of COVID-19 to the country remains high, an active PHE declaration has practical implications beyond the perception of the pandemic. A PHE is necessary to do the following:

- Facilitate coordination and collaboration across and amongst federal agencies and with state and local authorities, including providing flexibility for state, territorial and local health departments to reassign federally-funded personnel to assist with response;
- Facilitate the approval of new diagnostic tools to further expand testing in both symptomatic and asymptomatic populations, which is critical to a full reopening of society;
- Facilitate the approval of novel and repurposed medical countermeasures such as vaccines and antiviral drugs;
- Review and assure successful implementation of the July-December Jurisdictional Testing Plans, which are now due on July 10, 2020.
- Support those local and state public health officials who, in performing their legally-mandated duties to keep the public healthy and safe, have recently had their careers and safety threatened.
- Protect the most vulnerable in our communities by strengthening prevention efforts, maintaining increased access to telehealth, increasing access to testing, assuring quality health

care services, and addressing excess death rates in communities of color, among older adults, and those with serious conditions.

We urge you to extend the public health emergency declaration before its expiration later this month. We look forward to continuing our collaborative work with you to move our nation through and beyond this pandemic. Questions may be directed to Allen Segal, the American Society for Microbiology's Director of Policy and Advocacy, at asegal@asmusa.org.

Sincerely,

African American Health Alliance
AIDS United
American Association for Clinical Chemistry
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American Association of Bioanalysts
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association on Health and Disability
American Clinical Laboratory Association
American Clinical Neurophysiology Society
American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP)
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Hygienists' Association
American Lung Association
American Medical Technologists
American Optometric Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society for Virology
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
Association for Molecular Pathology
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Black Cardiologists
Association of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools
Association of Public Health Laboratories

Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Beckman Coulter
Big Cities Health Coalition
BioFire Diagnostics, LLC
Ceres Community Project
Children's Environmental Health Network
College of American Pathologists
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
CUGH
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Endocrine Society
Epilepsy Alliance America
Epilepsy Foundation
GenMark Diagnostics
Health Leadership Legacy Project
Hepatitis B Foundation
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Safety Equipment Association
Lakeshore Foundation
Luminex Corporation
Multipurpose Senior Services Program
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
National Athletic Trainers' Association
National Black Nurses Association
National Independent Laboratory Association
National Safety Council
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
Prevent Blindness
Prevention Institute
Quantitative Health
Research!America
Safe States Alliance
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Women's Health Research
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists
STChealth LLC
Tennessee Justice Center
The Family Resource Network
The Foundation for Sustainable Communities
The Gerontological Society of America

Trust for America's Health
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health
Washington State Department of Health
Youth Villages