



Primary Care for America

September 15, 2021

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

[Primary Care for America](#) is a diverse collection of organizations whose physicians, clinicians, products, and clinics are caring for infants and children; adults and seniors in the Medicaid, Medicare, and commercial markets; as well as the uninsured in every county across the nation. We applaud the Administration's efforts to promote widespread vaccination across the country and stand ready to work with you to achieve this goal.

We also want to thank you and your Administration for recognizing the important role that primary care plays in both administering vaccines and in educating and counseling patients of all ages on the safety and efficacy of vaccines, especially COVID vaccines. In fact, 73% of physicians report their relationships with patients have been key to addressing concerns and questions about the vaccine. Additionally, a significant supermajority of patients (80%) [reported](#) trusting their primary care doctor and 66% of patients were more willing to speak to their primary care doctor about a potential COVID exposure, while only 20% were willing to speak with public health officials. These data points underscore the vitality of the patient-primary care physician relationship in getting Americans vaccinated against COVID-19. As such, we urge your Administration to utilize every tool available to ensure that primary care physicians, clinicians and clinics receive adequate amounts of COVID-19 vaccines to administer to Americans who prefer to get their shot in their medical home.

Primary care has always been the foundation of our nation's prevention, public health and vaccination efforts. According to 2013-2017 MEPS, primary care physicians provided 46% of total vaccines, the highest share of all clinician types. Primary care physicians, clinicians and clinics deliver the majority of routine vaccinations for Medicare beneficiaries, providing an average of 69.7 million vaccination office visits per year. Similarly, children receive nearly 300 million vaccines each year, and one in six child office visits includes vaccine administration. Most infants, children, and adolescents receive routine vaccinations in primary care settings, where parents and families can have their questions and concerns addressed by a trusted clinician. More than half of all US children are eligible for the Vaccine for Children program, and can receive free vaccines from the more than 40,000 primary care practices and clinics nationwide that participate in the program.

Primary care clinicians also are essential to ensuring equitable distribution of immunizations. [A recent national survey](#) found that 44% of Latino and 53% of Black respondents would prefer to get vaccinated in their doctor's office than elsewhere. Community Health Centers alone have administered over 15 million COVID-19 vaccine doses in addition to millions of routine vaccinations with nearly three-quarters of those vaccinated were from communities of color. Meaningful partnership with primary care will help ensure that successful efforts to combat COVID-19 are not dependent on zip code, race or ethnicity.

Mr. President, it is important to remember that in addition to our focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, primary care practices and health centers are working edaily to administer other critical immunizations such as shingles, influenza, measles, and more. The temporary disruption in office visits due to the pandemic has revealed a corresponding dip in routine immunizations during that time. Pediatric vaccination coverage has declined alarmingly across milestone age cohorts. Among children aged five months, up-to-date status for all recommended vaccines [declined](#) from approximately two thirds of children during 2016-2019 (66.6%, 67.4%, 67.3%, 67.9%, respectively) to fewer than half (49.7%) in May 2020. In addition, Center for Disease Control (CDC) data from July show that children have missed more than 12.6 million doses of routine vaccines compared to pre-pandemic levels, including 1.6 million doses of measles vaccine alone. Vaccination rates for adults age 65 and older [dropped](#) 83% in 2020 compared to 2019, and in individuals age 19-49 years, there were declines of more than 60%. If not promptly addressed, Americans of all ages will be at increased risk of communicable and preventable illnesses—especially those in rural and underserved communities where there are many barriers to accessing needed care. Now that the CDC has issued [guidance](#) that the COVID-19 vaccine may be co-administered with other vaccines, there is tremendous opportunity to coordinate COVID-19 and routine vaccination efforts, something that primary care is uniquely positioned to do. In addition to public health messaging campaigns, we urge your Administration to take tangible steps to support primary care in helping their patients catch-up on missed vaccinations.

The urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated rapid deployment of vaccinations, and initially distribution solutions, such as the use of football stadiums, as well as reliance on national chain pharmacies, which was important in order to reach large volumes of patients as quickly as possible. Now that a significant percentage of adult patients have received their initial dose(s) of the COVID-19 vaccine, the focus has shifted to specific populations such as adolescents and those less eager or able to access the vaccine – patients better served by primary care clinicians. We appreciate that your Administration has begun emphasizing the essential role of primary care in not only the ongoing vaccine administration plan but also in helping to build vaccine confidence among those that have questions or concerns. As we prepare to administer the vaccine to newly eligible groups such as young children and potentially administer third doses to those that have been previously vaccinated, the need to prioritize more sustainable and personalized vaccination strategies over mass approaches becomes even more critical. All of this coupled with the surge in COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant, has renewed the urgent need to coordinate closely with primary care.

We know that to achieve community immunity against COVID-19 many more Americans will need to be vaccinated, including those who may still harbor questions and concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines or have not yet been reached by mass vaccination efforts, so it will be crucial to more effectively leverage the primary care workforce that exists today.

Mr. President, primary care is the underpinning of every successful public health effort – from smoking cessation to managing hypertension. Primary Care for America members and the clinicians they represent are trusted community leaders who partner with patients daily on their journey to health. Improving immunizations is an important part of that journey, and we call on the Administration to collaborate with primary care to achieve better health outcomes for all Americans.

If you or your staff have any questions about our comments, please contact Stephanie Quinn at squinn@aaafp.org

cc: The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services

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Primary Care for America (PCfA) is a collaboration focused on demonstrating the value of primary care, the need for increased primary care investment and the importance of innovation in primary care delivery and payment models. PCfA is comprised of a diverse group of key partners in the American health care industry: agilon health, Aledade, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Physicians, Catalyst Health Network, ChenMed, Elation Health, Everside Health, MDVIP, National Association of Community Health Centers, One Medical and VillageMD. For more information about Primary Care for America, visit primarycareforamerica.org.