

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned organizations, representing a wide array of Americans vulnerable to COVID-19, as well as professionals, whose work is in surveilling, preventing, and treating COVID-19, are writing to urge you to shift your strategy in dealing with the pandemic.

While we laud the Administration's efforts to vaccinate every American at no cost, as well as providing boosters, sending tests and masks to every American who requests them, the United States' recent record-setting single day death toll shows we must go much further.

As of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic has killed over 900,000 Americans - far surpassing the 675,445 total deaths from the 1918 flu pandemic - with no end in sight. Though the Omicron variant appears to have reached its peak, we continue to average more than 2,500 deaths per day. At this pace, we will reach 1 million American deaths before the summer.

The death toll from COVID-19 is unprecedented in the history of our Republic. We have already lost more than double the number of Americans to the pandemic than we did in World War II. And with an estimated 10-30% of all COVID-19 infections leading to "long COVID", we could be facing as many as 7 million newly disabled Americans.

To bring COVID-19 under control, we urge the administration to take the following steps:

- Populate the White House COVID Task Force with experienced public health experts who can guide the country through forthcoming variants and set a vision for Zero COVID.
- Rapidly upgrade and integrate the technology for surveillance and reporting of all infectious diseases, so the country has real time information on the pandemic, the ability to identify new variants of concern, and better prepare for what may lie ahead. This includes federal agencies as well as state and local public health departments and must be accompanied by committed funding to fortify and sustain these systems.
- Mandate the reporting of COVID-19 by all healthcare facilities, laboratories, and providers, both symptomatic and asymptomatic.
- Ensure that rapid tests and high-quality masks are available to every American at no cost for the duration of the pandemic.
- Invest in growing and supporting the public health workforce both in the short term and sustainably for the future.

- Develop a unified public messaging campaign about the pandemic, that is focused on national solidarity, and rebuilds trust in federal agencies through honest, forthright and evidence-based communication.
- Increase efforts to eliminate global vaccination disparities. In an age of global travel and trade, Americans will not be safe until the world has herd immunity.

While COVID-19 has extracted a human and financial cost unseen in over 100 years, infectious disease specialists believe we are in an age of pandemics brought about by novel diseases and growing antimicrobial resistance. Over the past 32 years, we have seen multiple disease emergencies starting with West Nile virus in 1999, and on to SARS (2003), H5N1 Avian influenza (2004), H1N1 pandemic Avian influenza (2009), Middle East respiratory syndrome (2012), Ebola in West African (2014) and Zika (2015).

At the same time these novel viruses have emerged, our ability to prevent and treat bacterial and fungal infections has waned. Once considered a “nuisance disease”, *C. difficile* exploded in the mid-2000s and now claims nearly 30,000 lives in the United States annually. Treatment resistant gonorrhea, while not deadly, has also surged, as have cases of syphilis, MRSA, CRE and VRE. A new fungus, *C. Auris*, seemingly resistant to nearly all antifungals, is causing hundreds of new cases each year. We have also seen the vast vulnerability of Americans living with chronic conditions. With an estimated 60 percent of U.S. adults living with one chronic condition and 40 percent with two or more there is clearly a great deal at stake to motivate a better response to infectious threats for human wellbeing as well as the stability of the health care system on which we all rely.

While the pandemic has triggered innovation in antivirals, including two recently approved for emergency use for COVID-19, our antimicrobial pipeline is dwindling along with our ability to fight infectious pathogens. These infectious pathogens can result in severe complications like sepsis - the body’s overwhelming response to infection - which can lead to organ failure and death. In the US, 1.7 million Americans are diagnosed with sepsis every year and 270,000 of those Americans die.

We stand ready to aid the Administration and local governments in any way we can. While COVID-19 continues to exact a terrible loss of life, and incalculable suffering, we know the United States can build a public health system to not only bring this pandemic to an end but prevent and be better prepared for future ones.

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network  
Alliance for Aging Research  
CancerCare  
CARLDEN Inc  
The COSHAR Healthy Communities Foundation  
Emory Antibiotic Resistance Center

HealthyWomen

NTM Info & Research

Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease

Partnership to Fight Infectious Disease

Peggy Lillis Foundation for C. diff Education & Advocacy

Sepsis Alliance

Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA)

The Stuart B. Levy Center for Integrated Management of Antimicrobial Resistance at Tufts  
(Levy CIMAR)