

February 5, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to bring to your attention an urgent situation that continues to need Congressional action to help correct: a sustained decrease in immunization rates for recommended vaccines across all ages. A bill introduced this week, the *Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act (H.R. 736/S. 167)*, addresses this situation and we urge you to include it in the next COVID-19 legislative package.

One of the unfortunate side effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is a dramatic fall in immunization rates among children and adults. The reduction in childhood immunization rates was noted early on in the pandemic in the May 8 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, which showed a significant decrease in orders for Vaccines for Children (VFC)-funded, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended non-influenza childhood vaccines, as well as measles-containing vaccines, from January 6 through April 19, 2020, when compared to the same time period in 2019. Additional analysis from VaxCare in June found that non-influenza vaccine rates among adults dropped dramatically as well during the COVID-19 pandemic, with rates down 83 percent for adults age 65 years and older and 60 percent for individuals age 19 to 49 years.

While vaccination rates stabilized somewhat last summer, once children returned to school in the fall, whether virtual or in-person, immunization rates again dropped off. Data released in November from Blue Cross and Blue Shield showed an estimated 26 percent decrease of those receiving the Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) and the Diphtheria, Tetanus and Acellular Pertussis (DTaP) vaccines, while the Polio vaccine dropped 16 percent. More recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) mirrors this trend and shows that as of January 3, overall VFC provider orders (other than flu) are down by more than 10.5 million doses compared to the previous year, with MMR/MMRV down by more than 1.3 million doses.

Unfortunately, this decline in immunizations threatens herd immunity levels, which provide protection in a community to those who cannot be vaccinated themselves, and raises the possibility of a secondary infectious disease outbreak during the pandemic. To ensure that children, adolescents,

and adults are still receiving routine immunizations, there needs to be continued and strengthened investment in the existing immunization delivery system and sustained messaging on the importance of receiving their recommended vaccines, particularly for children attending school. In fact, making sure children receive their ACIP-recommended vaccines will be key in ensuring that more schools can reopen safely. This is also important in addressing declining immunization rates in Black communities and other communities of color. As such, the undersigned organizations urge Congress to include the *Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act* in the next COVID-19 legislative package.

The *Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act* provides much needed funding to state and local public health departments to develop, scale, and evaluate local initiatives to boost vaccination rates during the COVID-19 pandemic. It would do so by strengthening partnerships with local stakeholders such as health care providers, schools, vaccine coalitions, and community-based organizations, disseminating culturally and linguistically appropriate information through communities and online social media platforms, and conducting outreach to promote health insurance options and immunization programs like Vaccines for Children, among other efforts.

While it is understandable that Congress is focused on the development and distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine and immunizing as many Americans as possible against COVID-19, we cannot ignore the potential consequences of secondary outbreak of infectious disease during the pandemic. As such, we urge Congress to take immediate action to provide much needed funding to state and local public health departments to promote ACIP-recommended vaccinations during the COVID-19 public health emergency and include the *Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act* during the next COVID-19 legislative package.

Sincerely,

#### National Organizations

AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families  
Academic Pediatric Association  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians  
American Institute of Dental Public Health  
American Lung Association  
American Pediatric Society  
American Public Health Association  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations

Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Biotechnology Innovation Association (BIO)  
Bridge the Gap – SYNGAP Education and Research Foundation  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children’s Specialty Care Coalition  
Council of Administrators of Special Education  
Council of Pediatric Subspecialties  
Families Fighting Flu  
Global Healthy Living Foundation  
Hep B United  
Hepatitis B Foundation  
Immunization Action Coalition  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.  
March of Dimes  
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of School Nurses  
National Birth Defects Prevention Network  
National Coalition for Infant Health  
National Consumers League  
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases  
National Meningitis Association  
National Perinatal Association  
National WIC Association  
Nemours Children’s Health System  
NICU Parent Network  
Pediatric Endocrine Society  
Pediatric Policy Council  
PremieWorld.com  
School-Based Health Alliance  
Society for Pediatric Research  
The Andrew McDonough B+ Foundation  
The Mended Hearts, Inc.  
Trust For America’s Health  
Unity Consortium  
Vaccinate Your Family

#### State and Local Organizations

Alana’s Foundation (Michigan)  
Alliance for Immunizations in Michigan  
Arizona Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Arizona Partnership for Immunization  
Arkansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
California Chapter 1, American Academy of Pediatrics  
California Chapter 2, American Academy of Pediatrics  
California Chapter 3, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Children's Defense Fund (Texas)  
Children's Wisconsin  
Common Good Iowa  
Delaware Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Ever Thrive Illinois  
Family Voices New Jersey  
Florida Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Hawaii Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Idaho Immunization Coalition  
Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Indiana Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Iowa Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Immunize Nevada  
Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Kentucky Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Langlade County Immunization Coalition (Wisconsin)  
Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Maryland Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Michigan Allergy and Asthma Society  
Michigan Association of Health Plans  
Michigan Association of Osteopathic Family Physicians  
Michigan Association of School Nurses  
Michigan Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health  
Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners  
Michigan Osteopathic Association  
Michigan Pharmacists Association  
Michigan State Medical Society  
Mississippi Center for Justice  
Missouri Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Montana Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Nebraska Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Nevada Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Nevada Public Health Association  
New Mexico Pediatric Society  
New York Chapter 1, American Academy of Pediatrics  
New York Chapter 2, American Academy of Pediatrics  
New York Chapter 3, American Academy of Pediatrics

New York Western Chapter, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
North Carolina Chapter, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
North Carolina Pediatric Society  
Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Oregon Pediatric Society  
Rhode Island Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan  
South Dakota Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network  
Tennessee Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
The Children's Agenda (New York)  
The Emily Stillman Foundation (Michigan)  
Utah Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Vermont Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Virginia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Wisconsin Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics