

September 3, 2020

Mike Pence, Vice President
White House Coronavirus Task Force
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Vice President Pence,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our serious concerns with the recent change to testing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),¹ which diminishes the importance of testing asymptomatic individuals who were exposed to COVID-19. We believe the revision does not reflect the best available science and the best interest of the public's health and has resulted in confusion among public health and medical professionals and the public. We ask the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to reverse the revision.

By CDC's own estimation, about 40 percent of infections are asymptomatic,² meaning people who do not know they are infected are a significant source of transmission. Identifying individuals infected with COVID-19 – even if they are asymptomatic – is critical to support appropriate isolation and quarantine measures, identification of contacts, to limit spread, and to provide the comprehensive view of community spread needed to inform effective public health responses. Testing of asymptomatic individuals may also be critical for certain high-risk workplaces, such as in nursing homes, and to support safe reopening of schools. By downplaying the importance of testing for asymptomatic individuals, especially those who have been exposed to the virus, these guidelines could precipitate further community spread. We are further concerned that changes to the testing guidelines could reduce insurance coverage for COVID-19 tests by incorrectly calling into question the medical appropriateness of testing on asymptomatic individuals.

In a moment when we are continuing to see COVID-19 surges in hot spots across the country and a desire to safely open schools and businesses, we need more testing, not less. The decision may delay the ability of communities to safely reopen and extend the social and economic toll of the pandemic on our communities. Given the shortages in testing supplies and personnel, we support prioritizing testing for symptomatic individuals. However, our goal as a nation should be to expand testing capacity to allow for testing of all recommended individuals,³ including asymptomatic people who have been in close contact with an infected individual. The solution

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overview of Testing for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). Aug 24, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID-19 Pandemic Planning Scenarios. July 10, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/planning-scenarios.html>

³ Infectious Diseases Society of America Guidelines on the Diagnosis of COVID-19. May 6, 2020. <https://www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/covid-19-guideline-diagnostics/>

to testing shortages is not to limit the number of people who are tested but to expand the availability of tests.

The foundation of public confidence in the national response to COVID-19 must include the protection of the CDC's widely recognized and respected independence and scientific integrity. As recently as July 22, CDC guidance clearly recommended testing for close contacts of individuals with COVID-19 and stressed the importance of identifying and quarantining contacts. The scientific basis for changes in recommendations must be clearly and transparently documented.

COVID-19 has killed over 180,000 Americans and has had a devastating toll on our economy and the welfare of our citizens. Only by continuing to do the hard work of containing the pandemic through robust and comprehensive testing can we succeed in ending it. We urge you to reconsider this revision.

Sincerely,

Adventist Health

Advocates for Better Children's Diets

African American Health Alliance

AIDS Action Baltimore

AIDS Alabama

The AIDS Institute

AIDS United

Alabama Regional Medical Services

Alamut Pharmacognosy, LLC

All Youth Access, LLC

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of HIV Medicine

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter

American Association on Health and Disability

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Council on Exercise

American Heart Association
American Kidney Fund
American Lung Association
American Medical Women's Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM)
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene
American Thoracic Society
Amida Care
Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers
Arthritis Foundation
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
AVAC
Aven Community Health Strategies
Babies, Birth and Breastfeeding
Berkeley Media Studies Group
Big Cities Health Coalition
Biophysical Society

Black Women's Health Imperative
The Boulevard of Chicago
Brandywine Health Foundation
California Colorectal Cancer Coalition (C4)
California School Nurses Organization
CAMI Health
Campesinos Sin Fronteras
Care Under One Roof Consulting
Catholic Charities / MLLTCO Program
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE)
Center for Health and Learning
The Center for Public Health and Justice
Central California Alliance for Health
Central Valley Health Policy Institute, Fresno State University
Ceres Community Project
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
ChangeLab Solutions
Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy
Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin
Chronic Disease Coalition
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials
Colorado Public Health Association
Colorado School Medicaid Consortium
Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS)
Community Health Councils
Community Memorial Health System

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
DCT LiveWell
Department of Epidemiology, University of Washington
Dona Ana Wellness Institute
Dorchester County Health Department
Eau Claire City-County Health Department
El Cajon Collaborative
El Centro Comunal Latino
Endocrine Society
Enlace Chicago
Epidemiology Section of the American Public Health Association
Epilepsy Foundation
Essex Passaic Wellness Coalition
Exceptional Family Center
Families USA
Family Health Outcomes Project, Univ. of California, San Francisco
The Fenway Institute
The Foundation for Sustainable Communities
The Gerontological Society of America
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Global Liver Institute
Granny's Haven
Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health
Green Thumb A V Youth Program
Grey Medical Advocate, LLC
Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center
Health Foundation of South Florida
Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Inc.

Health Promotion Strategies LLC

Health Resources in Action

Health Systems Consulting

HealthHIV

Healthy Schools Campaign

Healthy Weight Partnership Inc.

HearTHealth

Heartland Alliance

Hep Free Hawaii

Hill Nutrition Consulting LLC

HIV Dental Alliance

HIV Medicine Association

Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

Holy Cross Hospital

The Homeless Alliance, Inc.

HoneySuckle Lactation

Howard Brown Health

The Immunization Partnership

Immunize Colorado

Impetus - Let's Get Started LLC

Infectious Diseases Society of America

InsightFormation, Inc.

Johnson County Public Health - Iowa

Just God Academy

L.A. Care Health Plan

Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center

Lakeshore Foundation

Lee County Health Department

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Linn County Public Health
Long Beach Gray Panthers
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
Louisiana Public Health Institute
Macoupin County Public Health Department
Maine Public Health Association
March of Dimes
The Maryland Public Health Association
Mary Magdalene Community Service
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Mat-Su Health Foundation
Mended Hearts & Mended Little Hearts
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Michigan Association of Local Public Health
MLE Consulting, LLC
Mono County Health Department
Morris Heights Health Center
MPHI
Muscular Dystrophy Association
NASTAD
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of Health
National Association of State Offices of Minority Health
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Coalition of STD Directors
National Families in Action

National Health Council

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

National Network of Public Health Institutes

National Nurse-Led Care Consortium

National Working Positive Coalition

Natividad Family Medicine Residency Program

Natural Health Options

Neighborhood Health Center of WNY

New Jersey Public Health Association

New York State Public Health Association

NMAC

North Carolina AIDS Action Network

Northern Michigan Community Health Innovation Region

The Nourished Principles, LLC

NOVA Scripts Central

Obesity Action Coalition

Obesity Medicine Association

The Obesity Society

OCHIN

Office & Professional Employees International Union

Oregon Public Health Association

Oregon Public Health Institute

OSDH

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at CSULB

Pacific Island Health Officers Association

Paras and Associates

Peggy Lillis Foundation

Pennsylvania Department of Health

Planned Parenthood

Prescribed RxN

Prevent Blindness

Prevention Access Campaign

Prevention Institute

Professional Data Analysts

Public Citizen

Public Health Foundation

Public Health Institute

Public Health Solutions

Rare Kids Network

Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness GWU

Region Nine Housing Corporation

Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies

Respiratory Health Association

San Fernando Community Hospital and San Fernando Community Health Center

San Francisco AIDS Foundation

San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility

SANIPLAN

Schacht & Associates

Social Welfare Board of the County of Buchanan

Society for Children Orphaned By AIDS (SOCOBA)

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Society of Behavioral Medicine

Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education

Southern AIDS Coalition

Tougaloo College/Delta HealthPartners

Town of Norwood, Public Health Department
Township of North Bergen, Health Department
Training Resources Network, Inc.
Trans Empowerment Project
Treatment Action Group
Trust for America's Health
Two Sides of the Brain, LLC
UMASS Lowell - The New England Consortium (TNEC)
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health
University of Washington Department of Global Health
Unrestricted Fit
Vermont Public Health Institute
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials
Washington State Department of Health
Washington State Public Health Association
WelCore Health, LLC
West Valley Neighborhoods Coalition
West Virginia Rural Health Association
Westport Weston Health District
Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards
Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation
WKF Fund

cc: HHS Secretary Alex M. Azar II
Admiral Brett Giroir
CDC Director Robert Redfield