

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),<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> including asymptomatic people who have been in close contact with an infected individual. The solution

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<sup>1</sup> 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>.

<sup>2</sup> 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>

<sup>3</sup>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