

October 13, 2021

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients
White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Vice Admiral Vivek H. Murthy
U.S. Surgeon General
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Zients and Surgeon General Murthy:

We, the undersigned organizations representing physicians nationwide, urge you to make it simpler for office-based physicians, including primary care physicians and pediatricians, to access COVID-19 vaccines. Office-based physicians are trusted messengers located in every community throughout the United States. They are in the best position to reach the unvaccinated, help people overcome vaccine hesitancy, and determine the need for and timing of additional doses for their elderly patients and those with underlying medical conditions. Primary care physicians are best equipped to administer COVID-19 vaccines to children, alongside other routine immunizations, as soon as they are authorized for patients under age 12. Furthermore, office-based physicians can alleviate the strain on hospital systems as they are facing staffing shortages and a surge of COVID-19 patients.

Office-based physicians have continuously been left out of the vaccine rollout. While the federal government had urged states to supply more vaccines to primary care physicians, distribution efforts continue to prioritize pharmacies and community health centers. Further, the unpredictable delivery times, stringent penalties, and cumbersome application process for physicians to become COVID-19 vaccinators, including for those who already administer other vaccines, are limiting the role of primary care in vaccination efforts.

The handling of the COVID-19 crisis differs state by state. The consequences of relying on states to get more COVID-19 vaccines in physicians' offices may very well result in leaving physicians behind without vaccines and ultimately thwart vaccination efforts, especially among the unvaccinated population.

In a July report, the Commonwealth Fund found that "primary care providers play a key role in reaching many of the millions of Americans who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19."¹ Data suggest Americans favor receiving COVID-19 vaccine from a trusted doctor. A June survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that of people who are taking a "wait and see" approach to the vaccine, 46 percent were more likely to get vaccinated if the COVID-19 vaccine was offered to them at a place they normally go for health care.² A national survey conducted by the African American Research Collaborative and the Commonwealth Fund found that 44

¹ <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2021/jul/room-where-it-happens>

² <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/poll-finding/kff-covid-19-vaccine-monitor-profile-of-the-unvaccinated/>

percent of Latino and 53 percent of Black respondents would prefer to get vaccinated in their doctor's office than elsewhere, and more than half of Latino and Black respondents considered their personal doctor as the most trusted source of information on the vaccine.³

There are roughly 500,000 primary care physicians in the United States, who have traditionally administered nearly half of all adult vaccinations, inoculating their patients against pneumonia, flu and other infectious diseases.⁴ Distributor data suggests pediatricians administer an average of 253 doses of various vaccines a month and family practice physicians administer an average dose of 166 doses a month. Further, the recently updated CDC storage requirements for both Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines should make these vaccines even more widely available to the American public by facilitating the ability of community physicians' offices to receive, store and administer the vaccine⁵

As our nation and the rest of the world continues to be threatened by COVID-19, it is imperative that we utilize every available and existing resources to vaccinate the unvaccinated and to streamline the administration of the third dose or booster shots. We urge the federal government to utilize office-based physicians more effectively by providing them with easier access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Sincerely,

Aledade
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
Association of American Indian Physicians
Catalyst Health Network
ChenMed
Elation Health
Everside Health
MDVIP
Medical Group Management Association
National Council of Asian and Pacific Islander Physicians
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Medical Association
One Medical
VillageMD

³ <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2021/jul/room-where-it-happens>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/10/health/covid-doctors-vaccine.html>

⁵ <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-brief-fda-authorizes-longer-time-refrigerator-storage-thawed-pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine>