

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 16, 2021

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

Dear President Biden:

Thank you for your leadership to strengthen the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic and your call to convene an international summit on global COVID-19 vaccine access. In advance of this important convening, we write to urge you to take additional steps and make firm commitments to ramp up global vaccine manufacturing and delivery. Without additional U.S. leadership in this area, we will not be able to vaccinate the global population and end the COVID-19 pandemic.

We appreciate your promise that the United States will serve as the “arsenal of vaccines” for the world, including your leadership to procure and donate nearly 600 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX), more than any other country in the world.¹ We further commend the recent announcement to invest \$2.7 billion in vaccine manufacturing, the Quad Vaccine Partnership and its support of local production of COVID-19 vaccines around the world, and your commitment to work with global partners to end the pandemic by 2022.^{2,3,4} In addition, we are grateful for your leadership in joining and securing additional funding for COVAX earlier this year.

Despite these important actions, more is needed to expand global COVID-19 vaccine access and production and position the United States as the arsenal of vaccines for the world. According to experts, 11 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses are needed to vaccinate 70% of the

¹ The White House. (2021, August 3). *Fact Sheet: President Biden Announces Major Milestone in Administration’s Global Vaccination Efforts: More Than 100 Million U.S. COVID-19 Vaccine Doses Donated and Shipped Abroad*. The White House Briefing Room. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/08/03/fact-sheet-president-biden-announces-major-milestone-in-administrations-global-vaccination-efforts-more-than-100-million-u-s-covid-19-vaccine-doses-donated-and-shipped-abroad/>

² Stolberg, S.G. (2021, September 2). *The White House, amid calls to step up its global Covid response, says it will invest \$2.7 billion in vaccine production*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/02/us/politics/biden-covid-vaccine-production.html>

³ Holland, S. (2021, June 10). *Biden says biggest vaccine donation ‘supercharges’ battle against coronavirus*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/biden-announce-donation-500-million-pfizer-doses-urge-others-join-2021-06-10/>

⁴ Lee, J. & Morton, B. (2021, June 13). *G7: World leaders promise one billion Covid vaccine doses for poorer nations*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-57461640>

global population and significantly reduce the spread of the virus.⁵ So far, 5.82 billion doses have been administered globally, but less than 2% of the population living in low-income countries received even one dose.⁶ Clearly, there is an inequitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccine doses, and it is getting worse. Despite promises and pledges from some wealthy countries to donate nearly 1 billion doses to the global effort, only 15% of those donations have actually been distributed.⁷ Last week, COVAX announced that its 2021 forecast for COVID-19 doses available for distribution would be reduced by a quarter, from 1.9 billion to 1.4 billion.⁸ The United States can and should improve COVID-19 vaccine access for low- and middle-income countries and lead the entire world out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are several reasons why the United States should lead global COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing and distribution. The U.S. is uniquely positioned to address the humanitarian and moral issue of low- and middle- income countries lacking access to effective COVID-19 vaccines, which leads to spikes in COVID-19 cases and deaths, drives global inequality, and prolongs the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic will not end anywhere, including here in the U.S., until it ends everywhere. Without dramatic scale-up of vaccinations globally, more transmissible and threatening variants will continue to emerge and impact Americans.

Additionally, increasing the availability of vaccines globally will help to ensure that all Americans living abroad will have access to vaccinations. The U.S. State Department does not provide health care services for Americans abroad. Therefore, U.S. citizens must either procure vaccines through their host country or travel back to the United States where vaccines are more available.

Beyond the immediate public health implications, the U.S. economy could lose as much as \$4.5 trillion as a result of the lack of global economic output if this pandemic continues.⁹ Furthermore, recent polling indicates that over two-thirds of Americans support the U.S. investing in global COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing and distribution.¹⁰ By taking additional meaningful steps to promote vaccinations around the world, we will not only help end this pandemic, but we will continue to enhance the United States' global leadership.

⁵ Goodman, P.S., Mandavilli, A. Robbins, R., & Stevis-Gridneff, M. (2021, May 15). *What Would It Take to Vaccinate the World Against Covid?* The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/15/world/americas/covid-vaccine-patent-biden.html>

⁶ (2021, September 11). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations*. Our World in Data.

https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=OWID_WRL

⁷ World Health Organization. (2021, September 8). *WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19-8 September 2021*. <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---8-september-2021>

⁸ Mueller, B. & Slotnik, D.E. *Covax, a global program to distribute Covid vaccines, cuts its 2021 forecast for available doses by a quarter*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/02/us/politics/biden-covid-vaccine-production.html>

⁹ Kristof, N. (2021, May 26). *Vaccinate the World! The Best Investment Ever*. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/26/opinion/biden-covid-vaccine-world.html?searchResultPosition=1>

¹⁰ Lake Research Partners. (2021, August 6). *New poll shows strong support for US investment in a worldwide vaccine manufacturing and distribution program*. <https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/Global-vaccine-access-polling-memo-US.pdf>

For these reasons, we urge your Administration to announce a whole-of-government strategy and a detailed plan to expand global COVID-19 vaccine access by the end of the upcoming global COVID-19 summit.¹¹ This plan should provide clear answers to the following questions:

- What is the total number and delivery status of all COVID-19 doses that have been donated by the United States and other countries through COVAX or directly to other nations in need of vaccines, and what is the timeline for when all of these doses will be delivered?
- How will the United States and global partners ensure that vaccines are being sent to countries of highest need, and what are the factors that will be used to inform these decisions?
- How much additional funding will the United States and global partners invest to boost manufacturing infrastructure, source raw materials, and provide technical assistance to rapidly produce billions more COVID-19 vaccine doses? Specifically, what investments are needed to ensure we reach the global vaccination goals of 40% coverage by the end of 2021, and 60% by mid-2022?¹²
- How many regional COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing hubs and fill-finish facilities will the United States and global partners commit to developing to fulfill global COVID-19 vaccine needs?
- What steps will the United States and global partners take, including addressing international travel restrictions and transferring technical knowledge, to develop and deploy the skilled workforce needed to quickly manufacture COVID-19 vaccines?
- How many more doses will the United States and global partners commit to donate to support vaccinating the entire world?
- How much funding, technical assistance, and on-the-ground assistance will the United States and global partners invest into global COVID-19 vaccine delivery and helping other countries stand up effective COVID-19 immunization programs?
- Will the United States and global partners commit to providing more transparency, including by working with vaccine manufacturers, into the global COVID-19 supply chain so the public has a clearer understanding of the bottlenecks and other factors that may slow down global COVID-19 vaccine access?
- Will the United States and global partners fund research to help expand COVID-19 vaccine access, including by exploring whether fractioning COVID-19 vaccine doses can safely and effectively increase supply, the impact of extending expiration dates on vaccine effectiveness, and how to improve heat stability of mRNA vaccines so they do not need to abide by strict cold chain storage requirements?
- How much funding from the *American Rescue Plan Act* and previously enacted COVID-19 relief bills has the United States used to ramp up global COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, donations, and delivery, and how much available funding has yet to be

¹¹ This whole-of-government strategy can be based on provisions outlined in the *Nullifying Opportunities for Variants to Infect and Decimate Act (NOVID Act)*, introduced by Senator Merkley and Representative Krishnamoorthi.

¹² World Health Organization. (2021, May 31). *A New Commitment for Vaccine Equity and Defeating the Pandemic*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/a-new-commitment-for-vaccine-equity-and-defeating-the-pandemic>

obligated for global COVID-19 vaccine access? How much additional funding does the United States government need for this purpose?

Thank you again for your leadership in strengthening the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By taking additional steps to mobilize resources and work closely with our global partners, the United States can solve this complex technical and logistical challenge and lead the world out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

/s/ Tina Smith

Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

/s/ Raja Krishnamoorthi

Raja Krishnamoorthi
United States Representative

/s/ Mark Pocan

Mark Pocan
United States Representative

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator