

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 23, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

As Congress continues to work on legislation to address the COVID-19 pandemic, we request that you include robust funding for COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts. With at least one COVID-19 vaccine candidate likely to be available before or around the new year, this funding is urgently needed to ensure that Americans have swift access to these vaccines.

For months, as states, territories, Indian Tribes, and other localities have been responding to COVID-19 and working tirelessly to keep their residents safe, they have also been preparing to undertake one of the largest vaccination efforts in our nation's history. To accomplish this, jurisdictions must recruit and train thousands of health care workers, modernize data systems and registries, stand up vaccination sites, develop communications and educational materials, and build and support the infrastructure needed to distribute multiple types and doses of COVID-19 vaccines, among other activities.¹ In addition to facilitating vaccine distribution, these activities are also important for building vaccine confidence, particularly as recent data indicates that more than 40 percent of Americans would not be willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19.²

The Department of Health and Human Services intends to cover many of the costs associated with COVID-19 vaccines, including the vaccines themselves and ancillary supplies, during the public health emergency, and so far, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has distributed \$200 million to jurisdictions for COVID-19 vaccination efforts and plans to distribute an additional \$140 million, according to press reports.³ Jurisdictions need significant additional

¹ Fraser, Michael, and Claire Hannan. "ASTHO and AIM Letter to Congressional Leadership Requesting Funds for COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution and Seasonal Influenza." Received by Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leaders Schumer and McCarthy, 15 Oct. 2020, www.astho.org/Federal-Government-Relations/Correspondence/ASTHO-AIM-Funds-for-Vaccination-Distribution-Letter/.

² Reinhart, RJ. *More Americans Now Willing to Get COVID-19 Vaccine*. Gallup, 17 Nov. 2020, news.gallup.com/poll/325208/americans-willing-covid-vaccine.aspx.

³ Goodnough, Abby, and Sheila Kaplan. *Missing From State Plans to Distribute the Coronavirus Vaccine: Money to Do It*. The New York Times, 14 Nov. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/11/14/health/covid-vaccine-distribution-plans.html?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiWIRjeE4yWmtaRGcwT1RrMiIsInQiOiJXaVwvYUUtCaWg2bkY4R0JnZWtXeXh2NzJweFFLUE5xYXBVaHJYbXpcL1RzbFFBQ2I0NUstreGo3aHBVYk82UGRvaEFtcGUrMzJna3c4V0hQdU5hdTN2V2ZTTmZSZjRNOGRadGw1TDIZNDBJc2thMCIh4bXViM0ISYmZCZFpnVTJcLyJ9.

funding to successfully conduct the activities described above and in the interim COVID-19 vaccination plans that they submitted to the CDC last month.⁴ In September, CDC Director Robert Redfield acknowledged that the agency does not currently have the resources needed for vaccine distribution and that, “These jurisdictions are not going to be able to put these plans in place without resources.”⁵ Dedicated funding for COVID-19 vaccine distribution is especially critical now as jurisdictions are facing historic budget shortfalls amid the pandemic and funding for health departments had been inadequate even before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Public health experts have estimated that a bare minimum of \$8.4 billion is needed for COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts. This includes \$3 billion for workforce training and recruitment; \$1.2 billion for cold chain management; \$1 billion for improvements to vaccination infrastructure; \$700 million for vaccine coverage, effectiveness, evaluation, and safety reporting; and \$500 million for communications efforts, including building vaccine confidence, combatting misinformation, and conducting outreach to priority populations.⁶ Other experts have estimated that \$10 billion is needed to fund community vaccination clinics alone.⁷

To ensure that jurisdictions throughout the country are well-positioned to immediately, efficiently, and equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccines as they become available, we respectfully request that any upcoming legislation to address the pandemic include robust funding for COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts. Thank you for your serious consideration of this request, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

/s/

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

/s/

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

⁴ “The COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Operational Guidance for Jurisdictions Playbook.” *COVID-19 Vaccination Program Operational Guidance*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 5 Nov. 2020, www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/covid19-vaccination-guidance.html.

⁵ “Review of Coronavirus Response Efforts: United States Senate Committee on Appropriations.” *United States Senate Committee on Appropriations*, 16 Sept. 2020, www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/review-of-coronavirus-response-efforts.

⁶ Fraser, Michael, and Claire Hannan. “ASTHO and AIM Letter to Congressional Leadership Requesting Funds for COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution and Seasonal Influenza.” Received by Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leaders Schumer and McCarthy, 15 Oct. 2020, www.astho.org/Federal-Government-Relations/Correspondence/ASTHO-AIM-Funds-for-Vaccination-Distribution-Letter/.

⁷ Spiro, Topher, and Zeke Emanuel. *A Comprehensive COVID-19 Vaccine Plan*. Center for American Progress, 28 July 2020, www.americanprogress.org/issues/healthcare/reports/2020/07/28/488196/comprehensive-covid-19-vaccine-plan/.

/s/

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

/s/

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

/s/

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

/s/

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/

Tina Smith
United States Senator