

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2021

Mr. Jeff Zients
COVID-19 Coordinator
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Zients:

We write to seek an update on vaccination efforts in minority and under-served communities across our nation, which have borne the brunt of the pandemic. We appreciate the efforts of the Administration to direct more vaccines into minority and under-served communities through community health centers, public health departments, mobile vans, and partnerships with churches and other faith communities. As you continue these efforts, we urge you to ensure that individuals belonging to communities that are historically underserved, especially those experiencing kidney failure, who are a uniquely vulnerable and disproportionately comprised of minority populations, have access to the vaccine.

For dialysis patients, dialysis clinics represent the tip of the spear for health care and are uniquely positioned to improve health outcomes by ensuring that their compromised and disadvantaged patients are vaccinated chairside when they visit their clinics for care. These clinics treat a complex and vulnerable population with multiple comorbidities. In fact, 90 percent of dialysis patients have multiple comorbidities. The mortality rate for ESRD patients with COVID-19 is 20%+, which is well above the national average.

Dialysis clinics care for a patient population that is 55 percent African American, Latino, or nonwhite. Patients visit these clinics three times a week for four hours at a time to receive life-saving treatment. They tend to have trouble accessing transportation and technology. We know that vaccine hesitancy is prevalent in minority communities, and the relationship dialysis patients have built with their nurses and clinicians within the clinics reduces hesitancy. Their frequency of treatment also ensures the uptake of the second vaccine dose. In addition, these clinics typically have a high percentage of minorities.

Additionally, we understand that many of these health care workers are having trouble accessing vaccines, which is concerning given they should be part of the first group vaccinated based on their categorization as frontline healthcare workers.

As the COVID-19 vaccine roll out continues, please share with us what is being done to ensure this patient population and frontline health care workers are not left behind and, please let us know if consideration is being given for dialysis centers to receive direct vaccine allocations. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robin Kelly
Chair, CBC Health Braintrust

Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus