

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 22, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for the United States and for the world, with over 242 million cases and 4.9 million deaths worldwide.¹ The COVID-19 vaccines currently approved and authorized are remarkably effective and are a crucial tool to ending the pandemic. Thanks to the important work done by Operation Warp Speed, and now continued by the White House COVID-19 Response Team, important progress has been made to make vaccines more widely available. However, we are deeply concerned about the inequitable access to these vaccines and other essential supplies across the world and what that means for more avoidable infections, deaths, disruption to the global economy, and the risk of new variants.

We urge you in the strongest possible terms to do more to lead global efforts to end this pandemic and increase global vaccine access. We also encourage you to place a stronger focus on development of and access to COVID-19 diagnostics and treatments and strengthening health systems worldwide. We were encouraged by the recent steps that the United States has taken to increase global vaccine access, including the recent convening of the Global COVID-19 Summit and the commitment to achieving 70 percent global vaccination by September next year. However, more significant U.S. leadership, urgency, and accountability is essential for a more effective global response to the pandemic.

The Administration's commitment to buying 500 million more doses and sharing with our international partners is to be commended. This brings the total number of doses the U.S. has pledged to donate to 1.1 billion, representing the most donated internationally. However, we are concerned that to date, just 200 million of those promised doses have actually been shipped to countries in need.² At the recent summit, the United States also led efforts to develop targets for global vaccinations, urged vaccine manufacturers to enhance transparency on the supply and distribution of vaccines, and called for the expansion of global and regional production of COVID-19 vaccines. These are positive steps, but the United States should immediately take additional action to ensure these targets are met, and provide more leadership in global efforts to combat the virus. These steps should include the development of a specific plan to achieve the global vaccination targets and achieving transparency from vaccine manufacturers without any

¹ COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. Available at : <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>. Last accessed October 22, 2021.

² U.S. Department of State, "COVID-19 Donations." Available at <https://www.state.gov/covid-19-recovery/vaccine-deliveries/>. Last accessed October 22, 2021.

further delay so that other countries and COVAX can prepare for vaccine deliveries and distribution. We also encourage you to consider designating somebody in the White House to coordinate global COVID-19 response efforts. White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator Jeff Zients has helped to coordinate efforts to respond to the virus domestically, and your efforts to expand access to vaccines abroad would be well served by having a separate global COVID-19 point person in the White House.


As efforts and discussions between the United States, other countries, and other involved organizations at the United Nations continue, we request that the COVID-19 Response Team provide additional information to Congress on how the United States will continue to respond to increase vaccine availability globally:

1. What specific steps is the United States taking to ensure that the vaccine targets outlined at the global summit are met?
2. How is the Administration working with COVAX and manufacturers to improve transparency for vaccine orders and deliveries, including of donated doses, to ensure shipments are timely and met with the needed resources on the ground to be distributed?
3. What funds appropriated by Congress are being used to purchase vaccines that will be donated to other countries? Will the White House commit to greater transparency for how funds appropriated by Congress for the global COVID-19 response have been spent?
4. As the U.S. continues to push our international partners to also contribute more doses or funds to purchase doses, how is the U.S. following through on those commitments while simultaneously ensuring sufficient domestic vaccine supply?
5. Is the United States taking any steps to speed up the delivery of its donated doses?
6. Is the Administration sending any doses outside of COVAX? Will the Administration commit to taking a larger role in COVAX, particularly in the management of donated doses?
7. What capacity do countries receiving donated doses have to execute vaccination efforts on the ground? Is COVAX, or will the U.S., support any operational efforts as well as procurement efforts? How will in-country and regional U.S. government capabilities across relevant agencies—including USAID, CDC, PEPFAR, and DoD—be cohesively coordinated to support vaccination and broader pandemic response?
8. Is the United States pairing donated vaccine doses with the appropriate syringes and other necessary supplies to facilitate distribution and administration?
9. How is the Administration assisting countries receiving donated doses with vaccine education and finding locally or culturally appropriate solutions to addressing hesitancy?

Previously, the United States has been a leader in efforts to combat other diseases, including the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief was the largest commitment by any nation to address a single disease and to this day continues to save millions of lives worldwide. It is imperative that the United States steps up similarly in the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the safety of not only its own citizens but citizens of the world.

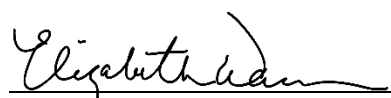
We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the urgent need to accelerate the Administration's efforts to address COVID-19 on a global scale in person with your staff. We look forward to receiving answers to the questions listed above and the chance to discuss next steps with the head of the COVID-19 Response Team, Mr. Zients, and others, in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,


BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator

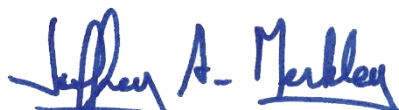

SHERROD BROWN
United States Senator

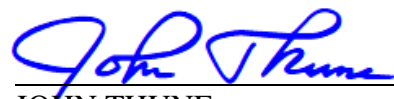

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cc: Ron Klain
Jeff Zients