

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence  
The White House  
Office of the Vice President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Deborah Birx, MD  
Coronavirus Task Force Response Coordinator  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Vice President Pence, Ambassador Birx and Secretary Azar:

The undersigned organizations write with urgency to strongly recommend that the administration immediately reverse its decision to bypass the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the collection and analysis of COVID-19 patient data. Our organizations represent healthcare providers, public health professionals, researchers and scientists, other healthcare professionals and patient advocates who have been central in responding to the pandemic.

**Maintain the integrity of COVID-19 data.** The administration's abrupt decision to establish a new data collection procedure that bypasses the CDC as a recipient of data on patients hospitalized with COVID-19 is alarming and will undermine efforts to control the pandemic at a time when COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are surging across the country. A core function of the CDC is to collect and report public health data and this important work is led by trained experts with the infrastructure necessary to ensure the validity and accuracy of the data in addition to protecting data from misuse. Placing medical data collection outside of the CDC puts the quality and integrity of the data at risk threatening to seriously undermine our country's response to COVID-19.

**Keep public health data public.** COVID-19 data collection and reporting must be done in a transparent manner and must not be politicized, as these data are essential to informing an effective response to the pandemic and to establishing public trust in the response. Data transparency is particularly critical in the midst of an unprecedented national health crisis that is disproportionately impacting certain segments of the U.S. population, including Black/African American, Latinx and Native American communities. Widely accessed COVID-19 tracking sites have already lost access to ICU hospitalization data – a key indicator for monitoring the state of the pandemic.

**Invest in CDC data reporting.** Rather than investing in a new data collection mechanism and reporting infrastructure, we strongly urge the administration to provide funding to enhance data collection and

Please contact the HIVMA Executive Director Andrea Weddle at [aweddle@hivma.org](mailto:aweddle@hivma.org) or the Infectious Diseases Society of America Vice President of Public Policy and Government Relations at [ajezeke@idsociety.org](mailto:ajezeke@idsociety.org) regarding this letter.

strengthen the role of CDC to collect and report COVID-19 data by race and ethnicity, hospital and ICU capacity, total number of tests and percent positive, hospitalizations and deaths. This critical function belongs with our nation's top public health agency.

**Data is critical to the state and local response.** The availability of accurate hospital data, coupled with other public health indicators, is essential for the state and local response. Jurisdictions need situational awareness about bed availability, shortages of supplies and personal protective equipment, and other healthcare needs in order to coordinate the response. Creating duplicate, siloed data reporting systems may make it harder for jurisdictions to get an accurate picture of the pandemic and limit visibility across neighboring states and localities

Reliable, comprehensive and timely data are essential to monitor and evaluate the state of the pandemic and to inform an effective response, including the distribution of essential supplies and treatment. We urge you not to advance the new data collection plan any further and instead consult with the public health and healthcare communities to discuss effective strategies for ensuring the availability of the data we all need and want to bring the pandemic under control in the U.S.

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth  
 AIDS Alabama  
 American Academy of HIV Medicine  
 AIDS Foundation of Chicago  
 AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta  
 AIDS United  
 Alabama Arise  
 American Association for Anatomy  
 American Association for the Advancement of Science  
 American Association for Dental Research  
 American Association of Geographers  
 American Association on Health and Disability  
 American Association of Immunologists  
 American College of Nuclear Medicine  
 American College of Physicians  
 American Educational Research Association  
 American Institute of Biological Sciences  
 American Lung Association  
 American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA)  
 American Public Health Association  
 American Society for Microbiology  
 American Society of Pediatric Nephrology  
 American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene  
 American Sociological Association  
 American Statistical Association  
 American Thoracic Society

American Urological Association  
 amfAR, Foundation for AIDS Research  
 APIC – Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
 Association for Prevention Teaching and Research  
 Association for Women in Mathematics  
 Association of Nurses in AIDS Care  
 Association of Population Centers  
 Association of Public Data Users  
 Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions  
 Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
 AVAC  
 Big Cities Health Coalition  
 Biophysical Society  
 Black AIDS Institute  
 Broom Center for Demography  
 Cascade AIDS Project  
 Center for Population Health and Aging  
 Center for Studies in Demography & Ecology, University of Washington  
 Centro de Comunidad y Justicia\*  
 Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences  
 Consortium of Social Science Associations  
 Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics  
 CUNY Institute for Demographic Research,

City University of New York  
 Duke Population Research Center  
 Endocrine Society  
 Entomological Society of America  
 Epilepsy Foundation  
 Every Texan  
 Georgians for a Healthy Future  
 GLMA: Health Professionals  
   Advancing LGBTQ Equality  
 GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer  
 HealthHIV  
 Health Care for All (Massachusetts)  
 HIV Medicine Association  
 Hoosier Action  
 Infectious Diseases Society of America  
 International & American Associations for  
   Dental Research  
 IRMA - International Rectal Microbicide  
   Advocates  
 Lakeshore Foundation  
 Lambda Legal  
 Mathematical Association of America  
 MDRC  
 Medical Care Section – American Public Health  
   Association  
 Mercy Care  
 Missouri Health Care For All\*  
 National Association of State Emergency  
   Medical Services Officials\*  
 National Black Nurses Association  
 National Coalition of STD Directors\*  
 Natural Science Collections Alliance  
 Neighborhood Health  
 New Mexico Center on Law & Poverty  
 North Carolina AIDS Action Network  
 Northwest Health Law Advocates  
 Oklahoma Policy Institute  
 Population Association of America  
 Prevent Blindness  
 Prevention Access Campaign  
 Prevention Institute  
 Protect Our Healthcare RI  
 Research!America  
 Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition  
 San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
 Social Science Research Institute, Duke  
   University\*  
 Society of General Internal Medicine

Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists  
 Southern AIDS Coalition  
 Spina Bifida Association  
 Tennessee Health Care Campaign  
 Tennessee Justice Center  
 Tennessee Primary Care Association  
 Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy/  
   Texas Impact  
 The AIDS Institute\*  
 The Hopkins Population Center  
 The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of  
   America  
 The Society for Public Health Education  
 The Well Project  
 Thrive Alabama  
 Trust for America's Health  
 University of Colorado Population Center  
 Utah Health Policy Project  
 UW Population Health Institute  
 WNAR, International Biometrics Society

\*Endorsement added July 20, 2020.