

June 23, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Azar:

We, the undersigned organizations, are committed to working with you, the Administration and Congress to meet the continued needs of the American public as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Together we represent millions of individuals working to address the unprecedented challenges the pandemic has presented to our society, our healthcare system, and our economy.

As such, we are writing to urge you to renew the current public health emergency (PHE) declaration for **at least** an additional 90 days before it expires on July 25. It is imperative that the federal government continue to deploy all resources and authorities necessary to protect the public and assist states and localities as they continue to respond to this urgent situation. As of the date of this letter, many states and localities are still experiencing dramatic increases in SARS-CoV-2 infections and hospitalizations due to COVID-19. At the same time, these areas are preparing for seasonal threats such as hurricanes, wildfires, influenza and more. We cannot afford to ease up on our response to this grave threat.

Furthermore, maintaining the PHE status is required if we are to increase the pace of research on SARS-CoV-2, accelerate development of medical countermeasures, streamline efforts to bring novel diagnostics, vaccine candidates and therapeutic options to market, and ensure that the public has access to health care and other social services.

In addition to the fact that it helps guard against complacency from the public while the threat of COVID-19 to the country remains high, an active PHE declaration has practical implications beyond the perception of the pandemic. A PHE is necessary to do the following:

- Facilitate coordination and collaboration across and amongst federal agencies and with state and local authorities, including providing flexibility for state, territorial and local health departments to reassign federally-funded personnel to assist with response;
- Facilitate the approval of new diagnostic tools to further expand testing in both symptomatic and asymptomatic populations, which is critical to a full reopening of society;
- Facilitate the approval of novel and repurposed medical countermeasures such as vaccines and antiviral drugs;
- Review and assure successful implementation of the July-December Jurisdictional Testing Plans, which are now due on July 10, 2020.
- Support those local and state public health officials who, in performing their legally-mandated duties to keep the public healthy and safe, have recently had their careers and safety threatened.
- Protect the most vulnerable in our communities by strengthening prevention efforts, increasing access to testing, assuring quality health care services, and addressing excess death rates in communities of color, among older adults, and those with serious conditions.

We urge you to extend the public health emergency declaration before its expiration next month. We look forward to continuing our collaborative work with you to move our nation through and beyond this pandemic.

Sincerely,

American Clinical Laboratory Association
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Big Cities Health Coalition
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
National Association of County and City Health Officials
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Trust for America's Health