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The Honorable Governor Larry Hogan
Chairman, National Governor's Association
444 N. Capitol St. NW
Ste. 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

The Honorable Governor Andrew Cuomo
Vice-Chairman, National Governor's Association
444 N. Capitol St. NW
Ste. 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

May 12, 2020

Dear Chairman Hogan and Vice-Chairman Cuomo:

As the nation's leading independent nonprofit working on behalf of the 37 million Americans with kidney disease, the American Kidney Fund (AKF) is dedicated to ensuring that every kidney patient has access to healthcare, and that every person at risk for kidney disease is empowered to prevent it. AKF is extremely concerned about recent decisions by some state and local governments to relax stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines before adequate safeguards are in place.

One in 7 adults in the United States are affected by kidney disease. Many of these Americans have multiple chronic conditions and are thus at high risk for contracting and severely suffering from COVID-19. They must take actions to reduce exposure. For those Americans living with kidney failure, also known as end-stage renal disease (ESRD) the situation is even more critical.

In order to survive, most ESRD patients on hemodialysis must travel to dialysis centers three days a week for four hours at a time to receive treatment. Sheltering in place is not an option for them, and every time they leave their homes they are risking exposure. Now it has become even more challenging for those who live in states and localities that have begun relaxing stay-at-home orders, particularly since infection rates and death totals continue to rise in communities across the country.

That is why AKF is respectfully calling on the National Governor's Association and state and local governments to develop action plans for reopening that will keep the unique needs of ESRD patients in mind when moderating stay-

at-home orders and strict social distancing measures. The shutdown of the American economy has had a severe impact on the population we serve, but premature reopening will cost many lives. This is especially important for communities of color. Kidney disease already has a greater impact on minority populations. For example, African Americans comprise 13 percent of the US population, but account for 35 percent of people on dialysis.

We also know that COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on African Americans. A recent article in the Journal of the American Medical Association¹ stated that more than 50 percent of COVID-19 cases and nearly 70 percent of COVID-19 deaths in Chicago involve African Americans, although they make up only 30 percent of the population. Moreover, these deaths are concentrated mostly in just 5 neighborhoods on the city's South Side. In Louisiana, 70.5 percent of deaths have occurred among African Americans, who represent 32.2 percent of the state's population. In Michigan, 33 percent of COVID-19 cases and 40 percent of deaths are among African Americans, who represent just 14 percent of the population.

While AKF recognizes the dramatic impact that stay-at-home orders have had on all those who have lost their jobs, and on state and local economies, we are also very concerned that prematurely relaxing these orders, before adequate testing is in place, will have a disproportionately deadly impact on vulnerable populations. These moves could needlessly cost lives, especially in minority communities. People with kidney disease and other chronic diseases are at particular risk.

Thank you in advance for your time and for your consideration of these important issues. We know this is a challenging time for everyone in our nation, especially those officials who are on the front lines of combatting this threat. On behalf of all of us at AKF, thank you for all you have done and for all you continue to do for our country every day.

Sincerely,



LaVarne A. Burton
President and CEO

¹ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2764789>