

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

I write today to urge the federal government to make a direct allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine to people with kidney failure receiving dialysis and frontline workers in all dialysis units across the United States. We recently signed a letter to the Biden Administration along with 44 other kidney organizations in support of this direct allocation. Vaccinating dialysis patients in the place where 90 percent of them receive care three times per week is the most efficient, safe and fair approach. The dialysis centers will also ensure that people receiving dialysis at home will get the vaccine.

Getting vaccines into these patients is matter of great urgency. Data have shown that kidney failure patients have a higher likelihood of infection and hospitalization from COVID-19. Among Medicare beneficiaries, these patients have an infection rate nearly four times higher and a COVID-19 hospitalization rate seven times higher than the general Medicare population.ⁱ

Further, COVID-19 and kidney failure both disproportionately impact communities of color.ⁱⁱ The Black population has a COVID-19 fatality rate of 132 per 100,000, and the Hispanic fatality rate is 102 per 100,000; the non-Hispanic white population has a death rate of 81 per 100,000.ⁱⁱⁱ Kidney failure also has a much greater burden on minority populations. Black people comprise 13 percent of the US population, but account for 35 percent of people on dialysis. Hispanics are 1.3 times more likely to be diagnosed with kidney failure compared to non-Hispanic populations.^{iv}

The American Kidney Fund fights kidney disease on all fronts as the nation's leading kidney nonprofit and we are ready to work you and the Biden Administration to get the COVID-19 vaccine to dialysis patients and the frontline workers who care for them.

Sincerely,



LaVarne A. Burton
President and CEO

cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy

ⁱ <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/medicare-covid-19-data-snapshot-fact-sheet.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://covidtracking.com/race/dashboard>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://covidtracking.com/race>

^{iv} <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/kidney-disease/race-ethnicity#:~:text=African%20Americans%20are%20almost%20four,failure%20in%20the%20United%20States.>