



October 23, 2020

The Honorable Robin Kelly
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1302

Dear Representative Kelly:

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) is writing in support of H.R. 8200, the “Ending Health Disparities During COVID–19 (EHDC) Act of 2020.” The health disparities that exist in the United States have been made even more evident by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we applaud your bill aimed at increasing COVID-19 testing for medically underserved populations, no cost COVID-19 treatment and better data collection related to health disparities, as well as addressing other issues that lead to treatment disparities and poor health outcomes.

We work on behalf of the 37 million Americans living with kidney disease and the millions more at risk, with an unmatched scope of programs that support people wherever they are in their fight against kidney disease—from prevention through transplant. With programs that address early detection, disease management, financial assistance, clinical research, innovation and advocacy, no kidney organization impacts more lives than AKF.

AKF has long been working to address health disparities even before COVID-19 because we saw how badly kidney disease was affecting Black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American and Alaska Native communities. The Black community makes up 12 percent of the American public, but over 35 percent of dialysis patients. Hispanics are 1.3 times more likely to be diagnosed with kidney failure, also known as end-stage renal disease (ESRD) than non-Hispanics. Native Americans and Alaska Natives are 1.2 times more likely to have kidney failure compared to Whites.ⁱ Seventy-five percent of new kidney failure cases are due to diabetes and high blood pressure, which are two of the chronic illnesses that have led to higher rates of COVID-19 fatalities. Your bill would help ensure that underserved communities have access to health insurance, good doctors and medical teams and the care they need.

Expanding access to health insurance is vital to ensuring that people have access to primary care, the ability to see specialists and the ability to obtain needed prescription drugs and biologics. We know that without early intervention, pre-diabetes can progress to Type II diabetes. We know that high blood pressure can be managed with prescription drugs to delay or avoid a heart attack and other cardiovascular events. People need affordable access to doctors for yearly physicals and wellness education. Health coverage enables appropriate health care and AKF is especially supportive of the provisions in your bill that lead to higher rates of health insurance in underserved communities.

Your bill will fill several gaps in the health care system that have left communities of color struggling with chronic illnesses and higher death rates due to COVID-19. H.R. 8200 will be an important step in getting the data, health care and other services to the communities we serve. I commend you for introducing the bill, and I look forward to working with you for a healthier and more just society.

Sincerely,



LaVarne A. Burton
President and CEO

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