

CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTING EDUCATION
OF THE COVID-19 VACCINATION
Catholic Cares Coalition



June 7, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the Catholic Cares Coalition, a national coalition of more than 50 Catholic religious and non-profit organizations promoting COVID-19 vaccination in our communities and working to address vaccine equity in the United States and around the world, we write to thank you for all that you have done so far to produce and distribute vaccines. We are grateful for your leadership and commitment to the common good – but as sickness and death from COVID-19 continue unabated in countries around the world, we see that more still needs to be done. We urge you to increase the United States’ efforts to address global vaccine access during the upcoming G-7 meetings.

We congratulate you for your bold and generous initiative to commit [\\$4 billion to support COVAX](#) and to share 80 million doses of U.S. vaccine supplies to other countries by the end of June. We also applaud launching partnerships to boost global capacity to manufacture vaccines and your support for temporarily waiving intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines to make more doses available.

These are critical steps, but more will be needed if we are to successfully protect our nation, our allies, and the world from COVID-19.

During the last year, our country and the world experienced profound suffering and challenges. Members of our coalition of Catholic health, education and social services organizations have met these challenges by caring for millions of patients in our hospitals, educating children in unprecedented circumstances, and feeding and housing those most in need in our commitment to

stand side-by-side with communities that were being ravaged by the pandemic here and around the world. Since the scale and severity of the crisis threatened everyone, we forged imaginative partnerships with state and local public health agencies, businesses, faith groups and community organizations to bring COVID-19 testing and treatment to hard-to-reach minority and rural populations so no one was left out. As the escalating crisis swept across the country, scarce medical resources and personnel were swiftly redeployed to areas that needed them most.

We are profoundly grateful that under your leadership our nation continues to renew itself as the COVID-19 vaccines bring hope and optimism to our communities. However, this optimism will not be fully realized if the blessings we have seen in our country are not shared more broadly with the rest of the world.

As people of faith, we believe that all people are created with innate dignity and worth by our Creator. And, as organizations working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand that our ability to move forward together from the pandemic requires that all people have access to safe and effective vaccines. Since the virus recognizes no borders, color or creed, our response to this grave threat must also be global to protect our citizens, allies and friends from Covid-19 and the new variants that are already emerging. Global vaccination is essential to rebuilding our economy, opening global markets, and restoring lives to promote the common good. It will protect U.S. citizens – military, business, state department, and missionaries - serving overseas. Most importantly, global vaccinations will give generations to come the opportunity for a healthy future and underscore the importance of global engagement to ensure a safe and healthy world.

We recognize that difficult decisions must be made about allocating limited resources to protect our nation from COVID-19 while ensuring that all people have access to life-saving vaccines and treatments. Today, 80-90% of vaccines administered have been in the developed world. If we are to make meaningful progress, we must ensure that developing and middle-income countries have access to vaccines and the ability to manufacture or produce vaccines for their own populations.

Going forward, we believe that several principles from Catholic Social Teaching provide a strong framework to produce and distribute safe and effective vaccines morally and equitably for the world. These principles include:

All people have inherent dignity: The cornerstone of global vaccine distribution is the understanding that all people have inherent dignity and worth. This is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is the core of a human-centered response to vaccine and medical supplies distribution. By recognizing that we are one human family and that our innate dignity supersedes the concerns of political or private self-interests, we can ensure that vaccine distribution is rooted in human need, safety, and effectiveness. This is particularly critical in assessing the appropriateness of sharing vaccines which are nearing expiration dates, or which may not be suitable for the storage or distribution capabilities of a given country or region. By grounding ourselves in the shared dignity of all people, we can help ensure that these decisions are motivated by safety and effectiveness rather than expediency.

The need for global solidarity and subsidiarity: A global pandemic cannot be halted by the work of one nation alone, but requires many organizations and nations working together to ensure safe and effective vaccines are available to everyone everywhere to keep communities safe. A combination of financial support, vaccines, knowledge sharing, and support services will provide a systemic strengthening of the global pandemic health response capabilities so that all people and nations can be “dignified agents of their own destiny.”¹

To this end, we urge you to expand the temporary waiver of some Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) rules for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments. These waivers will not only improve national capabilities to respond in the short-term but will also create a strong foundation for countries to build national capacity to react swiftly to new or emerging variants of the COVID-19 virus. We strongly encourage you to provide robust COVID-19-related TRIPS diagnostics, treatments, and vaccine waivers and to continue to provide the financial and technical assistance to improve vaccine equity around the world. Such actions will protect the long-term health of our nation and the world.

Option for the poor: We are reminded of the Gospel call that “If someone who has the riches of this world sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 Jn 3:17) Too often, we seek to only to provide what we have in excess while failing to acknowledge our responsibilities to contribute more to those who are poor and most vulnerable. Scripture reminds us that true charity goes beyond just giving to those what is their due or what we have in excess but requires us to truly sacrifice for the global common good.

We strongly recommend that you continue to support COVAX and the vaccine distribution program, and to contribute to a global response which prioritizes care for those in need of vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics. The United States has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its leadership for addressing global equity and systemic injustice by giving priority to those most in need – rather than what is solely most advantageous to ourselves.

We urge you and the other leaders of the G-7 countries to support a robust global response to the COVID-19 pandemic by rooting it in human dignity, standing in solidarity with all people and prioritizing long-term, systemic strengthening of our global health system for the entire human family. Now more than ever, our world is in dire need of such collaborative leadership. This is an unprecedented opportunity for our nation and the world to recognize that no one is safe unless all of us are safe and to stand up for each other, so no one is left out.

Sincerely,



Dr. Donald R. McCrabb
Catholic Cares Coalition Convenor (www.CatholicCares.org)

¹ Address to U.N. General Assembly, New York, Sept. 26, 2015.

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States
Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Marianist Universities
Association of U.S. Catholic Priests
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Climate Covenant
Catholic Health Association of India
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Catholic Legal Immigration Network
Catholic Medical Mission Board
Catholic Relief Services
Catholic Rural Life
Catholics for Family Peace
Christian Brothers Conference
Christian Family Movement - USA
Conference for Mercy Higher Education
Diocese of Davenport
Diocese of Sioux City
Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions
Felician Services, Inc.
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Mission Service
Friends in Solidarity (with South Sudan)
In Word and Witness
Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Leadership Roundtable
Magis Americas
Maryknoll Affiliates
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
Maryknoll Lay Missioners
Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns
Maryknoll Sisters
Medical Mission Sisters
Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Kansas City Province
Missionary Society of St. Columban
Missionhurst-CICM
National Association of Catholic Chaplains
National Association of Church Personnel Administrators
National Catholic Education Association
Network

Religious Formation Conference
SIGNIS
Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict
Sisters of the Precious Blood
SOAR
United States Catholic Mission Association

Cc: Katherine Tai, United States Trade Representative
Jeffrey Zients, White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator
Gayle E. Smith, State Department Coordinator for Global COVID Response and Health
Security