

July 23, 2021

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20050

Dear President Biden:

We write today as organizations representing diverse faith traditions and people of conscience working to address the health, social and economic challenges facing people around the world, including the United States, resulting from COVID-19. Over the past 20 months, we have witnessed the devastating impacts on the people in our congregations, communities, schools, and healthcare systems across the country and the world. We know that a just recovery for all will depend in part on ensuring that every person has equitable and expedient access to the vaccine, testing, and treatments to contain the virus.

As people of faith and conscience, we are called to care for the sick and vulnerable. Both Jewish and Muslim scripture teach that saving one life is akin to saving the entire world.¹ We are joined together by our common humanity. Or, as the Buddhist tradition reminds us, we are all part of one interconnected web of life. Pope Francis echoed this sentiment in his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*: “We are all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all.”²

We wish to express our gratitude for your Administration’s commitment to donate 500 million vaccine doses through COVAX and to other “hot spots” around the world, your support of the time-limited TRIPS intellectual property waiver at the World Trade Organization for global COVID-19 vaccine access, and your initial efforts to expand vaccine production through the Quad agreement and the U.S. Development Finance Corporation.³ We also thank you for supporting the allocation of \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights from the International Monetary Fund so that countries can respond to the health, economic, and climate crises. These are vitally important and welcome actions, but many more vials, tests, equipment, and treatments are urgently needed to stop the mounting scale of the pandemic worldwide.

¹ Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:9; Quran 5:32

² Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter “Fratelli Tutti, n. 32

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/17/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-is-providing-at-least-80-million-covid-19-vaccines-for-global-use-commits-to-leading-a-multilateral-effort-toward-ending-the-pandemic/>

Like you, we witness the great inequality in vaccine access between rich countries and low-and middle- income countries as well as within countries themselves. The United States is approaching the goal of a 70% vaccination rate and pharmaceutical companies are working on possible booster shots. Meanwhile, most countries have yet to secure, or are only now receiving, vaccine doses and are facing the possibility of vast majorities of their people not receiving a vaccine until 2022 or as late as 2024. New variants continue to emerge, such as the virulent Delta variant, and threaten to eventually make current vaccines ineffective. These realities are leading to large numbers of avoidable deaths, prolonged shutdowns and civil unrest, and severe economic distress around the world.

While we know that you face significant pressure to do otherwise, we encourage you to continue to be a strong voice for vaccine equity, technology transfers, and broad distribution and production capacity around the world. **Specifically, we implore you to:**

- Continue to distribute the surplus doses the United States has purchased to COVAX-AMC (for distribution to lower-income countries) and to “hot spots” around the globe; and prioritize worldwide distribution of vaccines to those without access before considering booster shots for the already vaccinated.
- Express strong support for the TRIPS waiver for vaccine recipes and expand this to include waivers for testing, treatments, and PPE as India, South Africa and 150 other WTO parties have proposed. The vaccine patent alone is not sufficient to manufacture vaccines, let alone the other tools necessary to contain COVID-19.
- Launch and invest in a global vaccine manufacturing program of scale and urgency to end the pandemic. This should be a whole-of-government approach to source and produce materials and train personnel, with regional manufacturing hubs around the world. This program should include a pledge to immediately share the knowledge, technology, and intellectual property to make safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments available to everyone by or before Spring 2022.
- Support technology-sharing initiatives such as the World Health Organization’s COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP).
- Encourage the EU and G20 to fully support these efforts.

On behalf of the global common good we must all do our part, as governments, civil society, and private enterprises, including pharmaceutical companies, to ensure that everyone everywhere can receive a vaccine and a chance to live a full life; to live in peace; to live in a healthy environment; and to work and receive an education.

We will continue to walk alongside individuals and communities suffering from the interconnected repercussions of the global health pandemic. We will look to and pray for your

leadership to shape a U.S. policy response that supports a just recovery – one that begins with global vaccine equity.

Sincerely,

Africa Faith and Justice Network

American Friends Service Committee

American Humanist Association

American Jewish World Service

Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative

Catholic Medical Mission Board (CMMB)

Christian Connections for International Health

Christians for Social Action

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

Church World Service

Churches for Middle East Peace

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Congregation of Sisters of Bon Secours

Congregation of Sisters of St Agnes

Dominican Leadership Conference

Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids

Dominican Sisters of Houston

Erie Benedictines for Peace

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart

Franciscan Action Network

Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends in Solidarity, Inc. (with South Sudan)
Get1Give1 Worldwide
Ginter Park Presbyterian Church
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ
Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
IHM Sisters Justice, Peace and Sustainability Office
Incarnate Word Sisters
Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center
Islamic Society of North America
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Medical Mission Sisters
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Missionary Oblates JPIC Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches USA
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light
Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore
Pax Christi USA
People's Federation for National Peace and Development (PEFENAP)

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.

Religions for Peace USA

Religious of Jesus and Mary

Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Western American Area

School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic-Midwest

Sikh Council for Interfaith Relations

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia Justice, Peace and Integrity for Creation Committee

Sisters of Bon Secours, USA

Sisters of Charity Federation

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team

Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA

Sisters of St Joseph of Carondelet

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, PA

Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Albany Province

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, LA

Sisters of St. Joseph of NW PA

Sisters of St. Joseph-TOSF Social Justice Committee

Sisters of St. Mary of Namur

Sisters of the Humility of Mary

Society of Helpers

Sojourners

Stuart Center Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

The Episcopal Church

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

United States Catholic Mission Association

Wheaton Franciscans JPIC Office

CC: Katherine Tai, USTR Ambassador
Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
Dr. Anthony Fauci, NIAD Director
Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
Gayle Smith, State Department Coordinator for Global COVID-19 Response and Health Security
Jeff Zients, White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator

For questions regarding the letter, please contact: Chloe Noel, Faith Economy Ecology Project Coordinator, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, chloe@maryknollogc.org