

**NOMINATIONS OF VIVEK MURTHY
AND RACHEL LEVINE**

HEARING
OF THE
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING THE NOMINATIONS OF VIVEK HALLEGERE MURTHY, OF
FLORIDA, TO BE MEDICAL DIRECTOR IN THE REGULAR CORPS OF
THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, AND TO BE SURGEON GENERAL OF
THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, AND RACHEL LELAND LEVINE, OF
PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

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**NOMINATIONS OF VIVEK MURTHY
AND RACHEL LEVINE**

Thursday, February 25, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Patty Murray, Chair of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Murray [presiding], Casey, Baldwin, Murphy, Kaine, Hassan, Smith, Rosen, Lujan, Burr, Paul, Collins, Cassidy, Murkowski, Braun, Marshall, Romney, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURRAY

The CHAIR. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will please come to order. Today, we are holding a hearing on the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to serve as Surgeon General and the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health. Senator Burr and I will each have an opening statement and I will introduce Dr. Murthy and recognize Senator Casey to introduce Dr. Levine.

After Dr. Murthy and Dr. Levine give their testimony, Senators will have five minutes each for a round of questions, and I am happy to stay for a second round if any Senator has any remaining questions. Before we begin, I want to work through the COVID-19 safety protocols in place. We will follow the advice of the Attending Physician and the Sergeant-at-Arms in conducting this hearing. We are all very grateful to everyone who has worked so hard to get this set up and help everyone stay safe and healthy. Committee Members are seated at least six feet apart, and some Senators, including myself, are participating by video conference. And while we are unable to have the hearing open to the public or media for in-person attendance, live video is available on our Committee website at www.help.senate.gov.

We received Dr. Murthy's formal nomination on January 20th and his Committee paperwork and his Office of Government Ethics paperwork, including his public financial disclosures and ethics agreement on February 3rd. And we received Dr. Levine's formal nomination on—

Senator BURR. Hey, Patty, can you hold for one second? They are working on getting you unmuted, and your video went away for just a second. So if you will, let us make sure that we have got you back before you continue.

The CHAIR. Can you hear me yet?

Senator BURR. We can hear you.

The CHAIR. Okay, great. And I am not sure where you lost me—

Senator BURR. If you back up about two sentences, I think you will have us.

The CHAIR. Okay. Well, let me just say we received Dr. Levine's formal nomination on February 13th and Committee paperwork on February 10th and her Office of Government Ethics paperwork on February 17th. Dr. Murthy, Dr. Levine, thank you both for joining us today. While I have not been able to meet either of you in person since your nomination, I was pleased to speak with each of you about the challenges our Nation is facing and I look forward to continuing those conversations today and working with you both in the future, remotely for now when it works and in person when this pandemic is over.

Of course, in order to end this pandemic and rebuild our Nation stronger and fairer, the Biden administration needs an all hands on deck as soon as possible, which is why it is so important that this Committee move quickly to consider and confirm qualified nominees like Dr. Murthy and Dr. Levine. We have lost over a half a million people to this pandemic to say nothing of the countless other ways it is upended the lives of families across our country. We desperately need trusted public health experts who can debunk misinformation and rumors, promote public health guidance on mask wearing, social distancing and more, and encourage vaccinations and inform people about vaccine safety and efficacy.

We desperately need leaders who understand what our communities are going through and who will go above and beyond to help our states, cities, and tribes get the support they need. In other words, we need people like Dr. Murthy and Dr. Levine. Dr. Murthy is a crisis tested leader who is uniquely qualified to help the American people navigate the health challenges ahead of us. I will say more about his impressive record shortly, but one of the reasons I know Dr. Murthy is the right pick to serve as Surgeon General is because he has already done the job and done it well. During his last tenure as America's doctor, he established himself as a trusted voice on public health issues, saw our Nation through public health emergencies like the Zika epidemic in 2016, he led the charge against the Opioid Crisis, and he shined a light on how stress, isolation, and other mental health issues threaten America's well-being, an issue that is all the more urgent given the trauma of this pandemic.

In short, he proved why he is exactly the kind of leader we need as Surgeon General today. I was proud to vote to confirm him as Surgeon General back in 2014. I am proud to support his nomination to return to that role now, and hopefully my colleagues will join me in working to get him in place quickly. I am also proud to support the nomination of Dr. Levine, who is a highly qualified and a historic choice to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health. I have always said our Government should represent the people it serves and the nomination of Dr. Levine, who would make history as the highest ranking openly transgender official in the U.S. Government, brings us a step closer in making sure that happens.

Dr. Levine is a public health expert who has a firsthand understanding of the challenges our states are facing and the support

they need. As the highest ranking health official in Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine led the state's COVID-19 response and advocated for resources and support Pennsylvanians needed. She focused on transparency and clear, science-based communication throughout the response and gave daily briefings on the status of the epidemic. But even before this crisis, Dr. Levine established herself as a trusted voice to the people of Pennsylvania on matters of public health through her work to establish opioid prescribing guidelines and education for medical students, make life saving treatment for opioid overdoses widely available, combat eating disorders, increase health equity, and help the LGBTQ community get healthcare. She served the state as Physician General, a position the Republican-led state Senate confirmed her to unanimously, and then Assistant Secretary of Health, a position she was confirmed to by an overwhelming 49 to 1 margin. Given her clear qualifications and the urgency of this crisis, I hope she will have similar bipartisan support here because a pandemic isn't the time to focus on politics.

We need to focus on getting people reliable information from expert voices that they trust, getting states, tribes, and communities the resources and support that they need, getting testing and tracing and vaccinations up, and bringing new cases down. We need to focus on providing mental health care as the Nation grapples with the trauma of this pandemic and on eliminating inequities that existed long before this crisis, have grown worse during it, and have made the pandemic so much more deadly for communities of color. We all know this pandemic is not going to be stopped by partisan politics. It is going to be stopped by swift action and by public health experts like Dr. Murthy and Dr. Levine. So I hope we can come together to confirm them in quick bipartisan fashion and work with them the way families across the country so desperately need us to.

Finally, I seek unanimous consent to put in the record 29 letters in support of Dr. Murthy's nomination, 51 letters in support of Dr. Levine's nomination, and—from hundreds of hospitals, public health groups, patient advocates, medical schools and universities, LGBTQ advocacy groups, and clinicians, faith based and medical organizations, reproductive rights and family planning groups, civil rights groups, and so much more. So ordered.

[The information referred to can be found on page 47 and 148]

The CHAIR. With that, I will recognize Ranking Member Burr for his opening remarks.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BURR

Senator BURR. Well, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to provide remarks as the Committee reviews the qualifications for two critical public health positions at HHS, the Assistant Secretary for Health and the Surgeon General. Dr. Levine, welcome. And Dr. Murthy, welcome as well. I also want to reinforce the Chair's words that we all seek bipartisan votes on nominees, but that doesn't mean that answers to questions don't have to be sufficient. Today is your opportunity for that. Each of you have accepted the nomination at an important time, when our country is facing one of the most challenging times in our history as we combat COVID-19. I have no doubt that should you be confirmed to

these important leadership roles, the majority of your time will be focused on responding to the novel coronavirus and its impact.

As Assistant Secretary of Health, Dr. Levine, you would be in charge of a range of health issues including human research protections and research integrity. As Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy, you would be responsible for providing Americans with the best scientific information and overseeing the Public Health Service Commission Corps, both of which continue to be critical to our pandemic response. The question before us today is are both of you prepared and qualified to take on the roles and responsibilities required? In addition to the challenges that face us today with the pandemic, this hearing will help answer those questions, but I am very concerned about a nomination that is not before us today. In fact, it hasn't yet been made by the Administration. The Assistant Secretary of Emergency Preparedness and Response, or ASPR for short, is a top adviser to the Secretary of HHS during public health emergencies. Congress created the ASPR to serve in a dedicated role that coordinates among all the operating divisions and agencies within HHS, including the Assistant Secretary of Health and the Surgeon General. We have been—we have before us nominees for both Assistant Secretary for Health and Surgeon General but not the coordinator, the ASPR.

While the words of this administration claim urgency in their response to COVID-19, their actions or lack thereof speak otherwise. The law calls for strong leadership during pandemic health emergencies. But the nominations before us, while important, do not fill the role of the Department charged with leading an emergency response. The Administration claimed to be ready on day one and the fact that a nominee for the ASPR hasn't yet been made and no meaningful effort in consultation with Congress about filling the position, quite frankly, raises serious questions. The ASPR is directed to communicate information from across the Department to the Secretary, bring in a daily vigilance and constant urgency to the health care needs of the American people so that the Secretary can make informed decisions both in the midst of a public health crisis and in times of preparation for the next threat we will face. We have been grappling with the novel coronavirus public health emergency for over a year.

The new administration has had ample time to choose an individual for this critical role. So it is difficult to understand why the ASPR nominee is not at least sitting here with the two of you, if not before your hearing. Since it is our responsibilities as Members of Congress to vet two nominees before us, I will try to understand the roles each of you will play at HHS during the COVID-19 pandemic and the qualifications and experiences you have to do so. Now, Dr. Levine, the position of Assistant Secretary of Health evolved during the pandemic under the previous administration, playing an integral role in the COVID-19 response. Dr. Giroir, and we have all struggled with exactly how to pronounce his name, but Dr. Giroir worked with NIH and BARDA as they partnered with innovators to develop and scale up testing technologies, help to address shortages of testing supplies, and worked with States to meet its testing needs. Dr. Levine, you have been on the front line of the COVID-19 response in your home State of Pennsylvania, which

faced great challenges with testing capacity early in the pandemic and vaccine rollout to this day. The state public health lab was only able to perform six tests per day in March of last year, six, severely limiting the public health response that relied on identifying where the state virus was spreading. Along with testing challenges from last spring, your state failed to adequately protect nursing home residents from the virus and is making unacceptable mistakes in the vaccine distribution process.

Pennsylvania ranks as one of the most dangerous states for long term care residents battling COVID-19. 52 percent of Pennsylvania's COVID-19 deaths came from nursing homes, and 3 in 10 of the deadliest facilities in the country were in Pennsylvania. Your state came in 46 in the country in its effort to put safeguards in place that manage the spread of infections in these settings, with only 16 percent of the state's nursing homes receiving infection control inspections that could have saved residents from the spread of COVID-19. While you stated that you relied on Federal guidance for the nursing home care during the pandemic, the tragic high mortality rate in your state's nursing homes shows that more was needed but wasn't provided. In my State of North Carolina, our health secretary also relied on Federal guidance for nursing homes and long term care settings. In North Carolina, nursing home mortality rate, while still high, account for 36 percent of the deaths in our state.

This discrepancy clearly shows that hiding behind Federal guidance is no excuse for taking action to protect our most vulnerable. I look forward to understanding exactly why your decisions when relying on the same Federal guidelines as my state resulted in a different outcome for Pennsylvania seniors. In regards to vaccine rollout, reports from your state recently indicated that tens of thousands of Pennsylvania residents mistakenly received the dedicated second dose of Moderna vaccine, meaning the second dose that was reserved for those who had the first dose and the second dose went to newly vaccinated people. While you may not have been in office during the last few weeks of the challenges facing your state, you were serving as the state's Health Secretary during the development and submission of its COVID-19 vaccine plan last October.

I might note that yesterday in the HELP Committee, Senator Marshall put into the record, I believe, 50 state plans that had been submitted and I think it is important that we understand that you cannot separate your role from the performance of your agency a matter of weeks after your departure. So I hope you will take those questions on seriously. At each step, testing, treatment and now vaccination, your state's response has fallen short. As the state's Health Secretary, this track record reflects on your ability to meet the challenges that would come across your desk immediately should you be confirmed. I am sure we will find similar problems in all 50 states and similar blame could be leveled on Congress. But you are the nominee, and I hope you will address those questions as best you can. Dr. Murthy, earlier this week you and I had an opportunity to discuss a range of issues, and I am thankful for that time as I did with Dr. Levine, that the Surgeon General will face in this administration, starting with the response to COVID. You have already served once as the Nation's doctor,

and my friend from Kentucky often tells us in the conference not much education comes out of the second kick of a mule. So I hope to learn more about why you want to do this again. Should you be confirmed, the American people will be placing their trust in you to communicate without political preference or pressure the best ways to keep their families safe during the crisis.

I worry about your ability to separate political influence from your ability to communicate health care decisions. In fact, you spoke at the Democratic National Convention, a wholly political event, just a few months ago. As a Co-Chair of the Transition Team's Coronavirus Task Force, you said that the President's goal of 100 million vaccinations by 100 days was doable, lowering expectations for an accomplishment well within our reach today. Before President Biden took office, our country was already vaccinating 900,000 people a day and had administered over 20 million doses—20 million shots. I am in politics, so I know lots of people try to lower expectations in order to look like they are accomplishing something when they are simply showing up, but the Surgeon General has to be trusted for the facts. 100 million people in 100 days isn't a stretch goal. And you shouldn't be afraid to stand up to the political staff who want you to lower the expectations so the Administration can easily reach them. The American people deserve a Surgeon General who will separate fact from fiction and level with us on the science.

Madam Chair, in conclusion, Dr. Levine and Dr. Murthy, the actions and positions that they have taken prior to your nomination and the process lead me to have some concerns. I hope that you will use today's hearing to address those concerns to earn my support. The position of Assistant Secretary of Health and Surgeon General are important and must be filled. But it is frustrating that the Administration chose to prioritize the nomination of candidates for these positions, as important as they are, instead of the nomination of the leader for Federal Government's response to pandemics that is required by law. Strong leadership will continue to be absolutely necessary throughout this phase of pandemic response. And I will use my time today to get an answer to the questions or the question, who is in charge?

Chair Murray, Dr. Levine's challenges in Pennsylvania to bring early adequate testing and to keep nursing home residents safe and Dr. Murthy's inability to separate politics from good public health policy are especially concerning when the role of ASPR still stands vacant. I look forward to hearing their testimony today, their plans to navigate a response at HHS without a Senate confirmed ASPR to provide the direction these two offices need during a challenging time. I thank both of our nominees for being here today. I yield back to the chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much Senator, Ranking Member Burr. We will now introduce today's witnesses. Dr. Vivek Murthy has a distinguished career that has solidified his reputation as a trusted public health expert. He has worked to improve the health of people across the country and across the world. And in doing so has shown beyond a doubt he is the right person to see us through this pandemic as Surgeon General.

Before he was a doctor, before I was a public health expert, Dr. Murthy was a kid growing up in Miami, Florida, the son of two immigrants from India. He attended Harvard University for his undergraduate degree, Yale for both his M.D. and M.B.A. and completed his residency in internal medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. His passion for public health was evident even as a freshman in college. That was when he co-founded Vision's Worldwide, an organization focused on HIV, AIDS education in the U.S. and India. And since then, he has only further demonstrated his ability to lead and his drive to help people stay healthy. He also co-founded the Swasthya project, which empowered women with training to become health care providers in rural India, Trial Networks, a company that works to improve medical research and collaboration and data sharing, and Doctors for America, a group of over 18,000 doctors and medical students that advocate for quality, affordable healthcare. In 2011, President Obama tapped Dr. Murthy to serve on the Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health. And in 2013, he nominated Dr. Murthy to be Surgeon General.

As America's doctor, he saw the Nation through the Zika epidemic in 2016, released landmark reports on the Opioid Crisis and the dangers of e-cigarettes to youth, and lead important discussions about mental health, something the trauma of this pandemic has made even more urgent. He also championed preventive health, including a memorable video he did with Elmo to help promote vaccines. Seems to me it is about time for us to do both. During this pandemic, he has been an important voice, urging people to follow public health guidance and keep themselves and others safe and has been a key adviser to President Biden.

He was a critical member of Biden's campaign's COVID-19 team and served as co-chair of the Transitions Coronavirus Task Force. Dr. Murthy is also the proud father of two children and the husband of Dr. Alice Chen, who is a physician as well and who is watching with us today. Dr. Chen, welcome to you. Dr. Murthy, we are so glad to have you with us today. Thank you for being here. And now I will turn it over to Senator Casey to introduce Dr. Levine.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Chair Murray, for your introduction of Dr. Murthy. And I am pleased to introduce Dr. Rachel Levine, the former Secretary of Health for Pennsylvania, also a former Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at Penn State University, and the immediate past President of the Association of State—[technical problems]—Health Officials, and the nominee to serve, of course, as Assistant Secretary of Health at the Department of Health and Human Services.

I have known Dr. Levine for years, thanks to a previous service as both Secretary of Health as well as the Physician General at Pennsylvania, a position that is comparable to that of our other distinguished nominee today, Dr. Murthy. In this terrible time of crisis for our country, when we have tragically lost over a half a million people to this terrible disease, the need for expert, experienced, and fact-based as well as compassionate leadership could not be more critical. This is the type of leadership that Dr. Levine has demonstrated in Pennsylvania throughout the pandemic. Dr.

Levine has strong roots in academics, clinical care, and protecting the most vulnerable among us. She has a distinguished career practicing pediatric and adolescent medicine in both New York and Pennsylvania, serving as Director of Pediatric Ambulatory Services and Adolescent Medicine at Penn State Hershey Medical Center, and she was the Founding Director of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders.

She is the author of numerous papers on opioids, adolescence, eating disorders, and LGBTQIA medicine. When COVID-19 came to our state, Dr. Levine's leadership was marked by clear, science based communication at her daily briefings. Her early action, her collaborative style, and her calm were recognized by the medical community as well as leaders on both sides of the aisle. The COVID-19 pandemic response was not Dr. Levine's first experience with crisis management. She earned the praise of Pennsylvanians and the public health community for her comprehensive and strategic approach to addressing the opioid addiction crisis in our state. She changed addiction, medical education, and prescribing practices, and she made naloxone, the lifesaving rescue medicine needed at the time of an overdose, she made it widely available to law enforcement, schools, and residents alike.

She worked tirelessly to address health disparities, including Black maternal mortality and obstacles to access to care faced by the LGBTQ community. Dr. Levine has dedicated her career to children and young adults, addressing physical, mental, and social care needs. As Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health, she brought that approach to all residents, including our seniors and long term care residents. As further evidence of her effectiveness and style of leadership, I would note that Dr. Levine was confirmed three times, three times to her prior positions in State Government by Pennsylvania's Republican majority state Senate.

I am grateful for her willingness to continue her distinguished career in public service, and I look forward to working with her in the role that I know she will be confirmed as Assistant Secretary of Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. Thank you, Chair Murray.

The CHAIR. Well, thank you, Senator Casey. Dr. Murthy, Dr. Levine we are looking forward to hearing from both of you now. And Dr. Murthy, you will begin with your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF HON. VIVEK HALLEGERE MURTHY, M.D.,
MIAMI, FL**

Dr. MURTHY. Thank you so much, Chair Murray. Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, distinguished Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored and incredibly grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would like to first introduce my wife and my best friend, Dr. Alice Chen, who is sitting behind me. It is her love and support that has brightened each day of my life since we first met more than a decade ago.

While they weren't able to be here in person, I am thinking today about the rest of my family who is watching from afar, my children, Teyjas, who is four, and Shanthi, who is three, my grandmother Sarojini and my sister Rashmi and brother in law Amit. And especially my parents Hallegere and Myetraie Murthy. They

came to this country from India decades ago. They had few contacts or resources, but they had high hopes that America would be a place where their children would find education and opportunity. They set up a small medical practice in Miami, and as a child, I watched them make house calls in the middle of the night and wake up early to visit patients in the hospital before heading into their office. They attended birthdays, weddings, and funerals for their patients, always there in the moments that mattered because they saw their patients as family and that is what you do for family. I have tried to live by the lessons that they embody, that we have an obligation to help each other whenever we can to alleviate suffering wherever we find it, and to give back to this country that made our lives, my life and the lives of my children possible.

This is a moment of tremendous suffering for our Nation. More than half a million people have lost their lives to COVID-19, including beloved members of my own family. Many more are facing long term health consequences and stressful financial struggles. If confirmed as Surgeon General, my highest priority will be to help end this pandemic. In the work I have done over the past year with Government leaders and schools and businesses and health care providers, I have seen the importance of providing clear, science based guidance to Americans on how to protect themselves and others. And I know how urgent it is that we communicate clearly about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and get them to people as quickly as possible, particularly those in underserved rural communities and communities of color. But as we address COVID-19, we cannot neglect the other public health crises that have been exacerbated by this pandemic, particularly the opioid epidemic, mental illness, and racial and geographic health inequities.

I have witnessed how these challenges are destroying lives and devastating families all across America. During my prior service as Surgeon General, I listened to and learned from people in rural communities in Oklahoma and in Alaska, and in big cities, including Indianapolis, New Orleans, and Charlotte. Their stories are what led me to issue the first Surgeon General's report on alcohol, drugs and health and to launch a national education campaign on opioids and safe prescribing. But we have so much more to do, and if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to address these crises. I will do so guided always by the very best science. And I will work with Secretary-Designate Becerra, Dr. Levine, and with colleagues across the Federal Government and at state and local levels. Equally as important, though, I will also work closely with community partners, from faith leaders and businesses to doctors, nurses, and educators.

I would also welcome once again the chance to work hand in hand with congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle, as I was privileged to do in the past as we together addressed the opioid epidemic, the Zika virus, and other public health challenges. And I would be honored, deeply honored to once again lead the United States Public Health Service Commission Corps, which for more than a century has helped our Nation respond to public health threats, including COVID-19. Senators, I know that the challenges before us are daunting. But if confirmed, I will never forget that at its essence, the role of the Surgeon General is that of a doctor,

one charged with serving every single American. I learned as a doctor to approach each patient with both head and heart, with science and compassion, recognizing that both have the power to heal.

I learned to respect the uniqueness of each patient, recognizing that solutions must be tailored to each individual. And I learned to listen deeply to the patient in front of me, to look beyond any labels, and to see that person in their fullest humanity, knowing that they were someone's mother, father, grandparent, child, sibling, and friend.

The most important job of a doctor is to help patients heal, and if confirmed, that will be my mission as Surgeon General, to do whatever I can, for as long as I can to help our communities and our Nation heal. Thank you so much for your consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Murthy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VIVEK H. MURTHY

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored and incredibly grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would like to introduce my wife and best friend, Dr. Alice Chen, whose love and support has brightened my life in countless ways.

While they weren't able to be here in person, I'm thinking today about the rest of my family who are watching from afar—my children Teyjas and Shanthi, who are our greatest joy; my grandmother Sarojini; my sister Rashmi and brother in law Amit; and especially my parents Hallegere and Myetraie Murthy, who came to this country as immigrants decades ago and set up a small medical practice in their community in Miami. As a child, I watched them make house calls in the middle of the night and wake up early to visit patients in the hospital before heading to their office. They attended birthdays, weddings, and funerals for their patients, always there in the moments that mattered because they saw their patients as family, and that's what you do for family.

I have tried to live by the lessons they embodied: that we have an obligation to help each other whenever we can, to alleviate suffering wherever we find it, and to give back to this country that made their lives and my life and the lives of my children possible.

This is a moment of tremendous suffering for our Nation. More than half a million people have lost their lives to COVID-19, including beloved members of my own family. Many more are facing long-term health consequences. And millions of Americans are experiencing secondary impacts on their health—from missed preventive care, to stressful financial struggles, to anxiety and depression.

If confirmed as Surgeon General, my highest priority will be to help end this pandemic, work I've been doing over the past year with state and local officials, schools and universities, businesses, health care providers, and others. I have seen firsthand the importance of providing clear, science-based guidance to Americans on how to protect themselves and others. And I know how urgent it is that we communicate clearly about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and get them to people as quickly as possible, particularly those in underserved rural communities and communities of color.

But as we address COVID-19, we cannot neglect the other public health crises we face, crises that have been exacerbated by this pandemic: particularly the opioid epidemic, mental illness, and glaring racial and geographic health inequities.

During my prior service as Surgeon General, I saw firsthand how these challenges are destroying lives and devastating families in every corner of this country. I listened to and learned from people in rural communities in Oklahoma and Alaska and in big cities, including Indianapolis, Indiana, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Charlotte, North Carolina. And their stories are what led me to issue the first Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health and to launch a national education campaign on opioids and safe prescribing.

But we have so much more to do, and if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to address these crises. I will do so guided always by the very best science. And I will work with Secretary-Designate Becerra, Dr. Levine, and with colleagues across the

Federal Government and at state and local levels. Equally as important, I will work in coordination with partners outside government: community organizations, businesses, faith leaders, doctors and nurses, and educators.

I would also welcome the chance to once again work hand in hand with congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle as I was privileged to do in the past in addressing the opioid epidemic, the Zika virus, and other public health challenges.

I am particularly eager to work with our Nation's great public health assets: the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, which has already helped our Nation respond to Ebola, Zika, H1N1, and COVID-19 and which has the potential to be an even more robust and resilient force to protect our Nation's health during and between pandemics.

I know the challenges before us are daunting. But if confirmed, I will never forget that at its essence, the role of the Surgeon General is that of a doctor—one charged with serving every single American. I learned as a doctor to approach each patient with both head and heart—science and compassion—recognizing that both have the power to heal. I learned to respect the uniqueness of each patient, recognizing that solutions must be tailored to each individual. And I learned to listen deeply to the patient in front of me, to look beyond any labels, and to see that person in their fullest humanity, knowing they were someone's mother, father, grandparent, child, sibling, or friend.

The most important job of a doctor is to help patients heal. And if confirmed, that will be my mission as Surgeon General—to do whatever I can to help heal our communities and our Nation.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination, and I'm happy to take your questions.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much, Dr. Murthy. And we will now turn to Dr. Levine for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF RACHEL LELAND LEVINE, M.D., MIDDLETOWN, PA

Dr. LEVINE. Madam Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The CHAIR. Could we make sure the mic is on? Thank you.

Dr. LEVINE. I am honored to be President Biden's nominee to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary-Designee Becerra, Dr. Murthy, and with each of you in service to our country. At its core, my career has been about helping people live healthy lives. As the Assistant Secretary for Health, I would be committed each day to helping the people of our Nation and improving our public health. I am both humbled by the opportunity and ready for the job. As you know well, we each come to public service in our own unique way.

In my case, I was a physician for many years, specializing in pediatrics and adolescent medicine and managing educational and departmental responsibilities at a major academic hospital system. Throughout my medical career, I have been particularly invested in health issues that are at the intersection of physical and behavioral health, and I brought that expertise to public health in addressing substance use disorders. After receiving my education at Harvard College and the Tulane University School of Medicine, I trained at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City. I practiced pediatrics and adolescent medicine at Mt. Sinai and Lenox Hill Hospitals. Then I moved to Pennsylvania and worked at the Penn

State College of Medicine and the Penn State Hershey Medical Center. At Penn State, I initiated a division of adolescent medicine for the care of complex teens with medical and psychological problems, and in addition, I started the Penn State Hershey Eating Disorders Program, which offers multidisciplinary treatment for children, adolescents, and adults with eating disorders.

When I left Penn State Hershey in 2015, I was Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry, Vice Chair of Pediatrics for Clinical Affairs, and the Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders. In 2015, I was named by Governor Tom Wolf to be the Physician General for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and confirmed unanimously to the post by the state Senate. I was confirmed twice more on a bipartisan basis to be Secretary of Health. In both roles, I concentrated on addressing the opioid misuse and overdose crisis in our state, working in partnership with the Federal Department of Health and Human Services on these efforts.

We focused on opioid stewardship, meaning the safe, appropriate, and responsible prescribing of opioids. We taught those practices to the medical students. In addition, we developed continuing medical education programs, we established prescribing guidelines, as well as a robust prescription drug monitoring program as part of our efforts. One of my most significant accomplishments as physician general was signing the first ever statewide standing order for the distribution of the lifesaving medicine naloxone. This enabled emergency medical personnel to carry naloxone to reverse overdoses as well as the public to readily access the medication, saving thousands of lives as a result. As Secretary of Health through the Pennsylvania Rural Health Model, we work to save rural hospitals by transitioning them from fee for service to global budget payments. This model aligns incentives for providers to deliver value based care and for rural hospitals to transform their care to better meet community health needs.

In addition, we establish a maternal mortality review committee to better understand and respond to the causes of maternal deaths. And we worked to improve childhood immunization rates as well as other priorities. Of course, our focus changed dramatically last year, and COVID-19 became my most urgent and primary focus. We concentrated on three key priorities to combat COVID-19 containment, with expansion of testing and contact tracing, mitigation with masks and social distancing, and medical countermeasures such as the distribution of medications such as monoclonal antibodies and, of course, authorized vaccines. As part of these efforts, we created a health equity task force, which included many community stakeholders, such as the Pittsburgh based Black Coalition Against COVID-19 and the Latino Connection.

We also launched a faith based testing strategy where people could get tested at their places of worship. There is still so much more to do. If confirmed, I will continue focusing on these issues at HHS to work to get the pandemic under control. I look forward to driving efforts and oversight within the office of the Assistant Secretary for Health that will bolster the health of our Nation. I look forward to your consideration and I humbly ask for your support. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Levine follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RACHEL L. LEVINE

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Dr. Rachel Levine, and I am honored to be President Biden's nominee to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services.

If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary-Designate Becerra, Dr. Murthy. And with each of you, in service to our country.

At its core, my career has been about helping people live healthy lives. As the Assistant Secretary for Health, I would be committed every day to helping the people of our Nation and improving our public health. I am both humbled by the opportunity, and ready for the job.

As you know well, we each come to public service in our own unique way. In my case, I was a physician for many years specializing in pediatric and adolescent medicine and managing educational and departmental responsibilities in a major academic hospital system.

Throughout my medical career I have been particularly invested in health issues that are at the intersection of physical and behavioral health, and I brought that expertise to public health in addressing substance use disorders.

After receiving my education at Harvard College and the Tulane University School of Medicine, I trained at the Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York City.

I practiced pediatrics and adolescent medicine at Mt. Sinai and Lenox Hill Hospital before moving to Pennsylvania and working at the Penn State College of Medicine and the Penn State Hershey Medical Center.

At Penn State, I initiated a Division of Adolescent Medicine for the care of complex teens with medical and psychological problems. In addition, I started the Penn State Hershey Eating Disorders Program, which offers multidisciplinary treatment for children, adolescents, and adults with eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

When I left Penn State Hershey in 2015, I was Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry, Vice Chair of Pediatrics for Clinical Affairs, and Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders.

In 2015, I was named by Governor Tom Wolf to be Physician General for Pennsylvania and confirmed unanimously to the post by the State Senate. I was confirmed twice more—on a bipartisan basis—to be Secretary of Health.

In both roles, I concentrated on addressing the opioid misuse and overdose crisis in the state and worked in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services on these efforts. We focused on opioid stewardship—meaning the safe, appropriate, and responsible prescribing of opioids—and teaching these practices to medical students. Additionally, we developed continuing medical education programs training providers on the safe and judicious use of opioid medication and established prescribing guidelines and a prescription drug monitoring program as part of our efforts.

One of my most significant accomplishments as Physician General was signing the first-ever statewide standing order for the distribution of the lifesaving medicine naloxone. It enabled emergency medical personnel to carry naloxone on the job to reverse overdoses and the public to readily access the medication, saving thousands of lives as a result.

As Secretary of Health through the Pennsylvania Rural Health Model, we worked to save rural hospitals by transitioning them from fee-for-service to global budget payments. This model aligned incentives for providers to deliver value-based care and for rural hospitals to transform their care to better meet community health needs.

In addition, we also established a Maternal Mortality Review Committee to better understand and respond to the causes of maternal deaths, and improve childhood immunization rates, among other priorities.

Of course, our focus changed dramatically last year, and COVID-19 became my urgent and primary focus.

We concentrated on three key priorities to combat COVID 19: Containment with expansion of testing and contact tracing. Mitigation with masks and social distancing. And medical countermeasures such as distribution of medications such as monoclonal antibodies and, of course, authorized vaccines.

As part of these efforts, we created a Health Equity Taskforce, which included many community stakeholders such as the Pittsburgh-based Black Coalition Against COVID-19 and the Latino Connection. We also launched a faith-based testing strategy where people could get tested at their places of worship.

There is still so much more to do.

If confirmed, I will continue focusing on these issues at HHS to get the pandemic under control and look forward to driving efforts and oversight within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health that will bolster the health of our Nation.

I thank you for your consideration and humbly ask for your support.

I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much to both of you. We will now begin a round of five minute questions. And I do ask my colleagues to please keep track of your clock and stay within those five minutes. I am happy to stay if any of you have additional questions for a second round. The United States is in the midst of the worst pandemic we have ever seen in over a century. And the previous administration's response to this pandemic was marked by the rejection of science, dissemination of misinformation, and the erosion of trust in our scientific agencies. And as we mark over a half a million people dead in this country, it goes without saying the toll has been profound under President Biden's leadership. We now have a science-led, coordinated national response.

In the past months, we have already seen significant increases in testing and tracing and vaccination, and we have seen downward trends in the number of new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. But there is a lot of work ahead to keep families safe, get everybody vaccinated, and fight misinformation with reliable public health guarantees. And we need to address troubling reports about people choosing not to get vaccinated by having trusted public health experts and trusted partners communicating with the American public about these issues.

Dr. Murthy, one of the important roles of Surgeon General is being a clear and prominent voice on the importance of science. If confirmed to this role, how will you promote confidence in our scientific agencies and in COVID-19 vaccines?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, thank you, Chair Murray, for that question. I think it is absolutely—for sure, that the essential job of the Surgeon General has to be to communicate in a way that is driven by science. And one of the great challenges during this past pandemic, or that is ongoing, is that we have been responding to the virus while we have also had to learn about the virus.

As our knowledge has changed, it hasn't always been easy to communicate clearly with the public about those changes. But my goal, if I was confirmed to serve, Senator, would be number one, to first and foremost work with the CDC, with the NIH, and other scientific entities and Government to make sure we are clear on what the science says, to go out to where people are and communicate that information clearly, including communicating why we change our recommendations if we do make changes. But I think, perhaps most importantly, Senator, I think public education actually starts not with speaking, but with listening.

I think that, I can say this for myself and perhaps, not in all the roles that I have played, but I have learned far more by listening to the people that I have sought to serve than I have by listening

to textbooks—by reading textbooks. Understanding their concerns, their needs, understanding how they interpret information can help us do better as public servants and public educators. And that would be the approach I would seek to take if I had the privilege of serving.

The CHAIR. Okay. Thank you. Dr. Levine, in your role as Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health, you worked closely with experts throughout the state on your COVID-19 response. How will that experience inform your efforts to work with state, local, and tribal public health and community leaders if you are confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Health?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you so much for that question. I certainly, if confirmed to this position, look forward to working with the Administration, the CDC, Health and Human Services on President Biden's strategic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I feel that I have a unique perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic, working as a state health official in Pennsylvania, in addition to my work as the president of ASTO, the Association of State and Territory Health Officials. I know firsthand the importance of the collaboration and coordination between Federal public health officials, state public health officials, and local public health officials. And if confirmed, I look forward to working with the Biden administration and others on coordinating our response.

The CHAIR. Thank you. The COVID-19 pandemic has really been a painful reminder that deep health inequities remain entrenched in our society, driven by structural racism, discrimination, and bias. From the beginning, this pandemic has taken a disproportionate deadly toll on people of color, which is entirely unacceptable. In addition to centering equity in our COVID-19 response, we have to commit ourselves to the hard work of building a more equitable health care system for all people, including families of color, people from low income backgrounds, underserved areas, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities and others that need to be able to get high quality, affordable care.

I am out of time, but Dr. Murthy and Dr. Levine, I know that is a priority we share, we have talked about, and I want you to know I look forward to working together to make sure health equity is incorporated in the COVID-19 response and all of HHS's public health work. So thank you again for being here. I will have more questions in the second round, but I will turn it over to Senator Burr for his questions.

Senator BURR. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Levine, as I mentioned in my opening statement, your state continues to struggle with COVID-19 response. How can you assure that the same challenges that Pennsylvania experienced in testing, nursing home care, and now vaccinations will not occur when given the opportunity to serve in the public health policy area?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question and the opportunity to respond. In Pennsylvania, we did work to have a scientific, evidence based response to COVID-19. There were significant challenges because this is a novel coronavirus, and especially in the spring, we had challenges with testing, we had challenges with contact tracing, etc. We had a lack of personal protective

equipment, as most other states did, that were impacted in the spring.

I think that the Nation's response has improved significantly and under President Biden's leadership and his strategic plan and task force, if confirmed, I look forward to my role in the Nation's response. I look forward, as I mentioned, to collaborating with a local, state, as well as Federal officials and working on that coordination and communication.

Senator BURR. Over the past few years, the National Institute of Health has been investigating cases involving NIH supported researchers who have failed to disclose support from foreign Governments and other entities, who have diverted intellectual property through grant applications and other NIH funded projects, or who have sought to influence or undermine the peer review process. The Office of Assistant Secretary for Health oversees the Office of Research Integrity. If confirmed, how will you seek to address attempts by foreign Governments to influence U.S. funded research?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Health and oversee, as you mentioned, the Office of Research Integrity, I certainly commit to working with you, to working with Congress, with other experts at Health and Human Services and NIH to make sure that research standards are of the highest quality and that there is no interference in research in the United States.

Senator BURR. Dr. Murthy, vaccine hesitancy is not limited to COVID. The 2019 measles outbreak, there were 182 cases reported in 31 states, and it shows the vaccine hesitancy is a growing problem for other conditions as well. Given your previous participation in politics and controversial policy debates, will you be able to effectively communicate the safety and efficacy of vaccines to those Americans who may not agree with your policy or your political views?

Dr. MURTHY. Thank you, Senator, for that question. Senator, I approach issues like vaccines and all public health issues, first and foremost, as a doctor. I was taught in medical school that it doesn't matter what someone's background is, doesn't matter what their race and ethnicity is, doesn't matter certainly what their political affiliation is, each person is a human life that has unique value, and we have to treat them with dignity and respect. And that is how I approached my job when I had the privilege of serving last time, Senator. With regard to the measles outbreak, my approach then in talking about vaccines was to start by listening to what people's concerns were, not to demonize them or castigate them for their stance, but rather to understand what their concerns are.

Second is to bring the best of science so that people can understand what the data actually tells us about these vaccines, what we know, but also to be honest about what we don't know. And last, sir, I believe it is important also to recognize that the Surgeon General is an important messenger, but not just directly in speaking to the American people, but in engaging with partners, in mobilizing trusted voices, including faith leaders and doctors and nurses in local communities.

That convening role is also important as Surgeon General. It is what I used certainly when I was building a national opioid campaign to work on changing prescribing practices. That approach to partnerships is what I would incorporate if I was working on a vaccine hesitancy strategy today.

Senator BURR. I am curious. Throughout the last year, the Surgeon General frequently communicated with the American people the best ways to keep families safe and healthy during a difficult time. How do you think the role of Surgeon General differs today from when you previously held that role?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, that is a great question. And I think it is especially important because I think the country is evolving and it is changing, and people's needs are evolving. And the Surgeon General's role has to evolve accordingly. You know, when I was there some things that are similar to when I served last time, some things that are different, I think, we have ongoing concerns around vaccine hesitancy, but I think that they are more complex and nuanced now than they were pre-pandemic. I think that the fragmentation in how people get their information is even greater now than it was seven years ago, with people not just getting their information from a couple of sources or a couple of social media platforms but getting it for a wide variety of sources.

To me, that increases the importance of us engaging with local partners who can speak to and access people where they are, as opposed to solely trying to, as individuals in Government, get on a few platforms or news, sources and assume that we are going to reach everyone. So that partnership strategy, the convening role of this Surgeon General, I think is even more important now than it was when I served in the last time.

Senator BURR. Thank you for that. Thank you, Chair Murray.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Burr.

Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Madam Chair, I thank you very much. I have a question for Dr. Levine and one for Dr. Murthy. I will start with Dr. Levine. Two issues relating to children. One is the mental health and the other is child abuse. One in five children, before the pandemic, suffered from mental health issues, and rates of anxiety and depression have doubled since the pandemic. It is hard to comprehend the scale of that. In fact, mental health issues now account for 30 percent of emergency room visits for high school and middle school students, 30 percent of emergency room visits, over half of young adults' report symptoms of anxiety and depression. That is mental health.

Then we go to the horror, the American scourge of child abuse, frankly, that neither party has done enough to combat. Child abuse is on the rise. We know that. And yet without the contact provided through in-person school, many more cases are going undetected. With all of these terrible stressors that are burdening our children, it is more important than ever that we focus on children's health and behavioral health needs. Dr. Levine, given the depth of your experience in addressing quality and access to mental health services, can we be assured that these issues will be a priority for you if you are confirmed to this position at HHS?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you very much for this question. And I would like to thank you so much, you and your staff, for all of your work on these very important issues. I am a pediatrician in my original field, and I still have a pediatrician's love for children and adolescents. And we will do everything possible to work for the betterment of children and adolescents in our country. Mental health, as I mentioned in my opening statements, has been really—that intersection between medical issues and mental health issues has been really one of the basis of my career, and I look forward to bringing that experience that I have in academic medicine and at the Penn State Department, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, to my role if I am confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Health. And I would very much like to look forward to working with you and your office and your staff, since I know that you have done a lot of work in this area.

Senator CASEY. Dr. Levine, thank you. Dr. Murthy, I have a question for you. Based upon your work combating vaccine hesitancy and the culture of prevention you have often spoken up to reduce the burden of preventable illnesses related to diet or exercise or isolation or vaccine preventable disease. To your credit, you have worked with others on these goals, reaching out to employers, faith based leaders, even partnering as Chair Murray mentioned, with Elmo and Sesame Street to better reach families.

When you co-chaired the coronavirus advisory team, you collaborated with Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, who is now leading the COVID-19 Equity Task Force, working to reduce disparities related to the pandemic and assure equitable allocation of resources, including the vaccine. We are now fortunate enough to see a light at the end of this terrible dark tunnel we have been in. The vaccines are helping us prevent disease and death. If we have all the information we need and trust so that more of us will make the decision to take the vaccine when it is our turn, if that happens in greater numbers, we will all be in better shape.

As Surgeon General, how will you use your leadership and the full force of the public health service to address this issue of vaccine hesitancy so the people of our country can establish the trust they need to take the vaccine?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, I thank you for raising this important issue. You know, I think we have seen concerning rates of vaccine hesitancy when it comes to the COVID-19 vaccine, and what I would seek to do if I had the privilege of serving is number one, seek to understand directly by listening to people, by showing up where they are, what is driving their concerns. And it is different. I think we can't assume that the same issues are concerns for everyone. We can't assume there is also one size fits all solution to vaccine hesitancy. We have got to understand what people's concerns are and then we have to bring the best of science to address those questions the best we can.

But, Senator, I also think that we have got to do this in partnership with local communities. I learned from my past experience as Surgeon General that one has to approach the task of communication with humility, recognizing there is a lot we do not understand and that people on the ground, faith leaders and educators and doctors and nurses, often know far more about what their commu-

nities need and what their concerns are. So we have got to listen with them, work with them. And together, I do believe that we can help reduce rates of vaccine hesitancy.

Senator CASEY. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Murray.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

Senator Paul.

Senator PAUL. Genital mutilation has been nearly universally condemned. Genital mutilation has been condemned by the WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund. According to the WHO, genital mutilation is recognized internationally as a violation of human rights. Genital mutilation is considered particularly egregious because, as the WHO notes, it is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. Most genital mutilation is not typically performed by force, but as WHO notes that by social convention, social norm, the social pressure to conform, to do what others do and have been doing as well as the need to be accepted socially and the fear of being rejected by the community.

American culture is now normalizing the idea that minors can be given hormones to prevent their biological development of their secondary sexual characteristics. Dr. Levine, you have supported both allowing minors to be given hormone blockers to prevent them from going through puberty, as well as surgical destruction of a minor's genitalia. Like surgical mutilation, hormonal interruption of puberty can permanently alter and prevent secondary sexual characteristics.

The American College of Pediatricians reports that 80 to 95 percent of prepubescent children with gender dysphoria will experience resolution by late adolescence if not exposed to medical intervention and social affirmation. Dr. Levine, do you believe that minors are capable of making such a life changing decision as changing one's sex?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for your interest in this question. Transgender medicine is a very complex and nuanced field with robust research and standards of care that have been developed. And if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Health, I look forward to working with you and your office and coming to your office and discussing the particulars of the standards of care for transgenderism.

Senator PAUL. The specific question was about minors. Let's be a little more specific since you evaded the question. Do you support the Government intervening to override the parent's consent to give a child puberty blockers, cross sex hormones and, or amputation surgery of breasts and genitalia? You have said that you are willing to accelerate the protocols for street kids. I am alarmed that poor kids with no parents who are homeless and distraught, you would just go through this and allow that to happen to a minor.

I would hope that you would have compassion for Kira Bell, who is a 23 year old girl who was confused with her identity. At 14, she read on the Internet about something about transsexuals. She thought, well, maybe that's what I am. She ended up getting these puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones. She had her breasts amputated. But here is what ultimately she says now. And this is a very insightful decision from someone who made a mistake but was led

to believe this was a good thing by the medical community. “I made a brash decision as a teenager, as a lot of teenagers do, trying to find confidence and happiness, except now the rest of my life will be negatively affected,” she said, adding that the medicalized gender transitioning was a very temporary, superficial fix for a very complex identity issue.

What I am alarmed at is that you are not willing to say absolutely, minors shouldn’t be making decisions to amputate their breast or to amputate their genitalia. For most of our history, we have believed that minors don’t have full rights and the parents need to be involved. So I am alarmed that you won’t say with certainty that minors should not have the ability to make the decision to take hormones that will affect them for the rest of their life. Will you make a more firm decision on whether or not minors should be involved in these decisions?

Dr. LEVINE. Senator, transgender medicine is a very complex and nuanced field. And if confirmed to the position of Assistant Secretary of Health, I would certainly be pleased to come to your office and talk with you and your staff about the standards of care and the complexity of this field.

Senator PAUL. Let it go into the record that the witness refused to answer the question. The question is a very specific one. Should minors be making these momentous decisions? For most of the history of medicine, we wouldn’t let you have a cut sewn up in the E.R., but you are willing to let a minor take things that prevent their puberty and you think they get that back? You give a woman testosterone enough that she grows a beard, you think she is going to go back looking like the woman you stopped with testosterone? You have permanently changed them. Infertility is another problem. None of these drugs have been approved for this. They are all being used off label.

I find it ironic that the left that went nuts over a hydroxychloroquine being used possibly for COVID are not alarmed that these hormones are being used off label. There is no long term studies. We don’t know what happens to them. We do know that there are dozens and dozens of people have been through this who regret this happened, and a permanent change happened to them, and, if you have ever been around children, 14 year olds can’t make this decision. In the gender dysphoria clinic in England, 10 percent of the kids are between the ages of 3 and 10.

We should be outraged that someone is talking to a 3-year old about changing their sex. I can’t vote for you if you can’t make a decision on this.

The CHAIR. Thank you so much, Senator Paul. Dr. Levine, thank you for answering the question.

I will turn to Senator Baldwin.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you, Chair Murray, and I want to welcome Dr. Murthy and Dr. Levine to the HELP Committee. It is good to see both of you again. I want to turn our attention, perhaps not turn our attention, sort of been speaking about this already, but to the issue of health disparities, which I know both of you have worked on, worked to address throughout your careers. Back when I served in the House of Representatives on the Energy and

Commerce Committee, we had a series of hearings on health disparities.

These hearings were shocking and perhaps part of the early stages of us as a Congress trying to tackle health disparities that exist. And I am recalling in multiple hearings where we would have a panel of expert witnesses talking about the health disparities that exist, talking about possible ways to diminish these disparities. And I would often ask this panel of Government experts or academic experts, what can you tell me about health disparities affecting the LGBTQ community? And the response I would often get is stammering and muttering, and we will have to get back to.

The Institute of Medicine ultimately did a very profound study on gaps in knowledge and a set of recommendations to how to close these gaps in our knowledge about health disparities impacting the LGBTQ community. Dr. Levine, based on your experience as a state health official, what should the Federal Government do to support state and other efforts to better prioritize and address the health needs of people in the LGBTQ community?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator Baldwin, thank you so much for your question and thank you so much for your work on this issue. Health equity is a critical aspect of our approach to COVID-19 and really to all health issues. COVID-19 has certainly shown us the challenge in healthcare disparities that we see in our Nation, and that would include the LGBTQ community. In Pennsylvania, we have had an annual LGBTQ health assessment which has given us very important data about the community.

In addition, we are the only state that is collecting sexual orientation and gender identity data in terms of COVID-19 testing. And I think this brings up the point of the importance of data. It is critically important that we include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity in our data collection. That would include many studies done by Health and Human Services and the CDC. And I think that as we get more data, then we understand more about these health disparities and then we can develop the appropriate policies in order to address them.

Senator BALDWIN. I really appreciate that. I want to pivot to the opioid and substance use disorder epidemic. It is certainly one of my top priorities and it is also a top priority for many Members of this Committee on both sides of the aisle. Unfortunately, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges in our response.

I am deeply concerned about reports of—well, reports of data of increased overdoses and other harmful effects of this crisis. This is to both Dr. Levine and Dr. Murthy. As Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary for Health, what would you prioritize in our response to the opioid and substance use disorders epidemic, including to make up for lost time, lost ground over the past year?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for this question. It is very, very important. The Opioid Crisis has been with us for a number of years, and it has worsened, as you mentioned, during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Pennsylvania, as Physician General and Secretary of Health, I concentrated on this. We worked on prevention, on rescue with naloxone, and an expansion of treatment, particularly medication assisted treatment. If confirmed, I look for-

ward to working with Dr. Murthy and SAMHSA and other experts on making sure that we fully address the Opioid Crisis.

Senator BALDWIN. Dr. Murthy.

Dr. MURTHY. Thank you, Senator, for that question. The issue of opioids and the Opioid Crisis is certainly near and dear to my heart. It is an issue that I focused a significant amount of attention on when I was Surgeon General last time. And as a clinician, as a doctor, I cared for many patients in Massachusetts and in neighboring states, including New Hampshire and Maine and Rhode Island, who struggle with issues related to opioids. You know, I think in the 2016 report that I issued on an alcohol, drugs, and health, I had laid out a number of steps we can take as a country not only to address opioids, but the larger crisis of addiction. But I still feel that there is important work we have to do, given exactly what you said, that overdose deaths have not gone down, in fact they have gone up, especially over the last year.

I think we still have more we can do to expand access to naloxone. We still can take steps to expand access to treatment, not only making medication assisted treatment more available by integrating it into primary care, but by making it easier also for clinicians to prescribe to their patients when they feel it is needed. But I also, Senator, feel that we can do more to invest in prevention.

We detailed in the 2016 report a number of programs, including school based programs that provide an extraordinary return on investment in terms of reduce healthcare costs, economic losses, and criminal justice costs with relatively modest upfront investments. I think a lot of those programs are still not well known. They are certainly under invested. But these are places where I think a little investment can go a long way and can ultimately help save lives.

Senator BALDWIN. Okay. Thank you very much.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Baldwin.

Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Levine, we had a very good discussion prior to this hearing covering a host of issues ranging from COVID in nursing homes to the need to get children back to school, to the opiate crisis that Senator Baldwin just touched on. I want to follow-up on two of those issues with you. And I want to read to you a statement that was made in an Op-ed that appeared recently in The Washington Post by some public health experts. They said, "at some point we have to recognize the consequences of keeping millions out of school for a year and treat this like the national emergency that it is."

I could not agree more with that statement. About half of the K through 12 students are out of school even as we meet today. Studies are showing that low income children in particular are falling behind academically. We have seen an increase in suicides and mental health problems due to isolation. Social development is being set back. There are very real consequences of children not being in schools, not to mention the extraordinary stress it is placing on many parents. In this Op-ed, public health experts suggested that three feet of distancing from student to student while keeping adults six feet from everyone else would be sufficient to allow many classrooms to reopen.

Similarly, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and I know you are a fellow of the academy, has said that, “schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to the six feet spacing rule with the potential downside if remote learning is the only alternative.” I would like to ask you very specifically what you will do to help us get our children back to school and whether you think that there are ways to safely accommodate, including looking at this recommendation for only three feet of spacing, which is a major obstacle now.

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you very much for your question. And I very much enjoyed our conversation the other day about this and other issues. I think everyone agrees and certainly as a pediatrician is that we need to do everything we possibly can to have children safely go back into the classroom and that it is very, very important. A number of weeks ago, the CDC did put out guidance regarding schools. And of course, this is a local issue. In Pennsylvania, of course, we have local control. So as the Pennsylvania Department of Health, we had put out guidelines, but it ultimately was the decision of the superintendents and school boards about whether their learning would be remote, hybrid, or in person.

But I have had the opportunity to read the articles that you mentioned and review the American Academy of Pediatrics statements and I found them very interesting. And if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed to this position, I would very much like to work with others at Health and Human Services, to work with Dr. Walensky at the CDC and look really closely at this issue.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you. Because there are a diversity of views of how we can safely open schools and we are really seeing the downside of not having them open. We also talked about COVID in nursing homes. And you assured me that Pennsylvania did not do what New York did, that it accurately reported. However, I am told that in September 2020, Spotlight Pennsylvania reported issues with inadequate disclosure of cases and deaths in nursing homes. For example, some facilities were consistently listed as having no data in the weekly state reports. Yet at least one provider, which operates five facilities, said that they did respond with information. Do you still stand behind your statement to me that the data were accurately reported?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question and the opportunity to clarify this issue. I do stand behind my statement. Pennsylvania was always completely transparent in terms of our data, in terms of COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes as we were in and other data that we reported. What you do have to understand is that there is a lag time from the time that a tragic death would occur to the time that it hits our electronic death reporting system and then we would report that death. And that lag time can be sometimes days, but sometimes weeks. And so a nursing home might have had a death, but it wouldn't have hit our system for several weeks later and then it be recorded in terms of our data. So that lag time explains the Spotlight PA report.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much, Senator Collins.

We will turn to Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Madam Chair and Ranking Member. And to our nominees, congratulations on your nominations. You know, I think I will just start here. I think the U.S. response to COVID-19 will go down in history as the worst failure of domestic governance in the history of the United States. And I feel very emotional. As I say those words—there have been some failures in the U.S. on foreign policy issues that have been notable ones. But in the sense of domestic governance, I cannot think of a worse one. This is now the third most deadly event in the history of the United States, just a single event.

Spanish Flu, 675,000 Americans died. Civil war, 620,000 Americans died over the course of the war. We are now north of 500,000 and climbing. More deaths than the entire WWII, for example. So many of these deaths were unnecessary if you measured the United States against the experience of other nations and set aside nations that are communist nations, that have a command and control over citizens that a democracy doesn't, but just use democratic nations, our peers in the OECD or in the G7 and look at their experiences.

If you just wanted to average them together and say if we had done what they had done, hundreds of thousands of fewer deaths in the last couple of days, Dr. Fauci said that no nation handled this worse than us. And we are a Nation with the best health care institutions in the world, the best health care providers in the world, an industrial base that, when pressed under warp speed, did an amazing and miraculous job of producing a vaccine, vaccines, multiple vaccines that work. We have had health care providers on the front lines who have just been unbelievably heroic. We have got Virginia Guardsmen and women and guardsmen and women from other states who are out doing the testing and then out again doing food bank distribution. And they are out right now doing vaccinations. So many people to be proud of.

But how did a Nation like this, how did a Nation like the United States find ourselves in a position where we have led the world in deaths at such an untold scale? It really just started—in my way of thinking, there were a whole lot of things that caused it. But it started with the big lie perpetrating that this was going to go away, that it wasn't anything we needed to worry about. We have learned that a president with a microphone has the loudest voice in the world and that voice can be used for good or evil. But the big lie that was perpetrated at the beginning of this, together with other errors, like the CDC mistakenly deciding not to use the test protocol and then developing a faulty protocol on their own that had to be scrapped.

Did this put us in this horrible situation? I am very emotional about this. I know nine people that have died of COVID. Last time I checked, the Nation of Taiwan only had nine deaths. The entire nation right across a narrow strait of water from China where the virus originated. I think if we are not willing to sort of acknowledge that, look in the mirror, then we are not going to be prepared for the next one. And one of the things that I am excited about, both of you, your nominations, is you have a track record that can help us prepare for the next one. I have colleagues who are very focused on trying to do a 9/11 commission to analyze the events that happened here on January 6th. We need a commission that

will analyze why the U.S. got the pandemic wrong. That is much more important. Senator Collins, you and Senator Menendez had a bipartisan bill to do that, which should be a pressing need for us to analyze what went wrong in the pandemic, because there will be another one.

When there is another one, we have to show that we are wiser and able to deal with it, Dr. Levine, I want to ask you a particular question. I was a little worried at the beginning of the Biden roll-out of sort of a COVID response team that I didn't see enough people who I thought had state level experience. As a former mayor and Governor, I love doctors. I love academics. I love, people at think tanks. I love the brainiacs, but I really love the implementors because what happens in a situation like this is everything we do has to survive the reality test of being able to be implemented at a state level or in a city.

Talk about your state level experience and what that does in terms of adding to the team so that we can both fight our way out of COVID, but then ensure that the Nation never falls down so badly on a job as we have in the last year.

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you very much for that question. Thank you for your passion about this subject and for public health. COVID-19 certainly has been the biggest public health crisis that the country has seen in 102 years. And it has taken an enormous toll on our country and with over 500,000 deaths. Each death is a tragedy, as you have been pointing out.

I think that this pandemic has shown the importance of public health like nothing else possibly could, and that would include local public health, state public health, and Federal public health, and most importantly, the collaboration and coordination between all different aspects of public health.

You are correct, as the Secretary of Health in Pennsylvania, under the Governor's leadership, I lead Pennsylvania's response in containment and mitigation and then distribution of medical countermeasures, such as medications, remdesivir, monoclonal antibodies, and the vaccine. If confirmed to this position, I would very much like to take that experience in operationalizing the Federal initiatives and the Federal guidelines and strategy really at the state and local level. And I hope to make my contribution that way.

Senator KAINE. I am over my time. Thank you for indulging this, Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

We will turn it over to Senator Cassidy.

Senator CASSIDY. Thank you. Doctors Levine and Murthy. I could ask either of you my questions, but I will start with you, Dr. Murthy. Dr. Murthy, health equity is something that we must all be concerned about. I spent 25 years caring for patients in a public hospital for the poor and uninsured and so that, as you might guess, particularly means something to me. That said, when I hear some people speak about it, it sounds as if it is something to stoke resentment, as if any health inequity must reflect injustice.

Now, we are all, all three of us are physicians and so I just want to explore this because I think it is important. Are there biologic or scientific reasons that make somebody more susceptible to dying if they contracted the virus? And of course, there are. The older

someone is when they get it, the more likely they die, up to if you are over 85, you really have a high death rate. But Dr. Murthy, could you suggest some of the other comorbidities, medical condition, that if they are present, can be associated with increased morbidity, mortality from COVID infection?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator Cassidy, thank you for that question and it is good to see you today. I enjoyed our conversation a few weeks ago. You know, I think you are right that the origins of the disparities that we see in health are complicated, and with COVID in particular, why some communities are experiencing worse outcomes than others. Some of that we understand but we have—we are still learning about that. It is a complex product, I believe, of the environment, of biology, of preexisting structural inequities in our system, which make it harder for—

Senator CASSIDY. Specifically though, what are some—I have limited time, specifically what are some of the medical comorbidities associated with worse worst outcomes? Because we don't make the diagnosis. We are docs. If we don't make a diagnosis, we are doomed to fail in terms of the treatment. And so I guess I am just exploring if you have thought about this, which I am sure you have, but could you be a little bit more pointed to answer my question?

Dr. MURTHY. Sure, Senator. Well, fortunately the CDC has noted a number of conditions that do increase the risk of poor outcomes with COVID. Obesity is one of them. Cardiac disease is another. We know that some preexisting lung conditions as well can do the same. We know diabetes—

Senator CASSIDY. Can I ask you—thank you, and again, sorry, I just have limited time?

Dr. MURTHY. That is Okay.

Senator CASSIDY. Are these medical conditions generally distributed through the population or are they more likely to occur in some groups of Americans as opposed to other groups? However you define that, socioeconomic or, however.

Dr. MURTHY. Sure, yes, they are not evenly distributed, Senator. They are disproportionately distributed in the population.

Senator CASSIDY. If such a group that which has a disproportionate representation of such a comorbidity has worse outcomes, that is important to know, because if all we do is assume it is injustice and there may just be an increased prevalence of obesity, then our diagnosis is flawed, maybe partially, maybe partially true in one instance, but not true in the other. To the degree that it is not true would negatively affect our ability to effectively address. Is that a fair statement?

Dr. MURTHY. Senator, I think you are correct that we have to look clearly at the data and understand what it is telling us. And I think that this is where I think science has to lead us as we make the diagnosis, as you put it, and also as we formulate solutions for how to address the disparate outcomes that we see.

Senator CASSIDY. I agree with that. And so if we are going to talk about health inequities, it is important not to just stoke resentment, but to acknowledge that there is a biologic basis for why some do worse than others, for example some people are older, and then recognize that frankly, as however we can't address it, obvi-

ously we can't affect age, I wish we could, in order to have the appropriate treatment. So let me ask you—let me ask you both. I will ask this to Dr. Levine.

If obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, gallstone disease, many of what I just listed is associated with the worst outcome, is it fair to say the Federal Government should be doing more to address the epidemic of obesity?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question and bringing up the issue of health equity and health disparities. In terms of your specific question, we certainly need to concentrate on the prevention and treatment of obesity and as a pediatrician, particularly childhood obesity. But I also think that when looking at COVID-19 healthcare disparities, that we have to look also at the social determinants of health, which are critically important in terms of influencing health outcomes from COVID and many other conditions.

Senator CASSIDY. I agree with that. We do need to look at social determinants of health. If we look at somebody and we control for social determinants, but nonetheless, they were obese, that hypertension and diabetes, do we think—are you telling me that the social determinants would overwhelm those medical risk factors, or do you think that the medical risk factors would be more important in determining somebody's outcome?

Dr. LEVINE. I think all of those factors would be important.

Senator CASSIDY. Yes, but that is not what I am asking Dr. Levine. I am asking to rank them, please. And I don't mean to be rude, but I am out of time and I am about to get called down. How would you rank them?

Dr. LEVINE. I don't think it is possible to rank them, sir. I think that they are all involved.

Senator CASSIDY. I yield back. Thank you, Dr. Levine. I yield back. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Cassidy. Before I turn it over to Senator Murphy, I do want to say Dr. Levine, I want to say I appreciated your thoughtful and medically informed response to Senator Paul's questions earlier in the hearing. It is really critical to me that our nominees be treated with respect and that our questions focus on their qualifications and the work ahead of us rather than on ideological and harmful misrepresentations like those we heard from Senator Paul earlier. And I will focus on that as Chair of this Committee. So thank you again for your response. And with that, I will turn it over to Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Let me associate myself with your remarks. Thank you for the way in which you handled those questions. Really looking forward to working with you, Dr. Levine. Have two sets of questions for both of you. One for each, excuse me. Dr. Murthy, I wanted to talk once again about this issue of vaccine distribution. I know there was some conversation about vaccine hesitancy earlier.

I convened a conversation in Connecticut last week to talk about vaccine equity, and I received a significant amount of pushback from the folks around the table when this conversation came up about hesitancy. Many of them felt like that was an effort to blame communities of color for a problem that has, I think, potentially

been created through the design of how we have administered the vaccine. When you create a sort of first come, first serve vaccine system, you disadvantage those who work two or three jobs, who have trouble taking a day off work in order to make the one appointment that is available.

I heard a lot about just the lack of information that when you don't listen to people about where they get information, that you end up with broad sectors of the population, especially those maybe who don't have English as the first language, not having basic information about when the vaccine is available. And so when we have this conversation about equitable distribution of vaccines, I want to make sure that we are building systems that meet people where they are, rather than just looking at these numbers.

Where in Connecticut we have incredibly low rates of African-Americans and Latinos who are taking up the vaccine and say, oh, that's because, those populations don't want it or we have to convince them why it is important, a lot of it, I think, is that the design just makes it harder for communities of color, low income communities to be able to access it. How do you respond to that critique?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, it is good to see you and thank you for that question. Look, I think that you are highlighting a critical issue here, which is a vaccine hesitancy is complex and not solely experienced by members of racial minority groups. But there are many groups in society right now that at some level are concerned about vaccines. And we have to recognize that and understand that their reasons for hesitancy are different because that will inform our response. But the distribution, you are right, the disparities we often see with vaccine distribution are often related to preexisting structural challenges that we have, one of them being a lack of access to health care that many people unfortunately face.

If we want to, not only with COVID, but with future potential pandemics, have a system that can respond well, we have got to ensure that we have community health centers that can actually distribute this vaccine. And this is why these are such a powerful part of our health care apparatus. We have got to be able to quickly stand up mobile units to bring the vaccine to where people are. And we also have to ensure that we are establishing community vaccination centers strategically in locations where typically it is hard for people to access these vaccines.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you. Appreciate that. I think so much of our conversation on the subject is around this question of hesitancy is an important one. But we have to be talking about systems as well. Dr. Levine, I and a group of my colleagues have been pushing really hard to have specific money set aside in the COVID package for summer programing. And summer programing for kids that is centered on their emotional well-being. As a parent of two school age kids in the public school system, neither of which have set a foot inside their school, have been doing full distance learning for the last year, I really worry about our kids' emotional health.

I know we have talked about that already today. We have seen suicide rates increase, emergency visits skyrocket. And this summer I really think we have got to work on emotionally resetting kids, getting them reconnected to their peers. They are ready to

learn. You know, this is your field of specialty. What is your sort of broad sense of what kids need right now? Where should our focus be on making sure that kids are emotionally healthy once schools sort of fully reopen and get back to normal in the fall?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for this question. I particularly enjoyed our discussion about this a number of days ago. Certainly, the mental health needs of children in our country right now are at the forefront. Pediatric and adolescent mental health has been part of my career in academic medicine and at the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and I think COVID-19 has certainly exacerbated those mental health issues and mental health needs. I was really quite taken by your idea in terms of summer programing. And if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed to this position, I would very much look forward to meeting with you again and your staff and working on this issue and see what we can do to actualize it.

Senator MURPHY. Right. Well, thank you very much. Thanks to both of you for your willingness to continue your service to the country. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

I believe that Senator Marshall is next on the Republican side.

Senator MARSHALL. Alright, thank you, gentlemen. Appreciate the time. Welcome, Dr. Murthy. Good to see you again, Dr. Levine. Good to meet you in person as well. Appreciate your time with the doc caucus four years ago and hope you will come back and visit us. My question, and I will let you both answer it. You know, we talk about the goal of the current administration is 100 million vaccines in 100 days today.

Today we have already got 85 million vaccinations out the door. We should be able to be doing 2 or 3 million vaccinations a day. We have the infrastructure, as you all know, to do 3 million flu vaccines per day. And I am trying to get how you both think because you are going to be offering advice and goals. And is it feasible? But I would think that we could do 3 million vaccinations a day in March, get us up to 150 million people vaccinated by the end of March. I think 25, 50 percent of people have had the vaccine, or have had the virus already.

My theory is we could have herd immunity by April or May. Is that possible? Is that feasible? What type of advice would you be offering to the president and the team that is working on this, and maybe like a 30 second answer? Dr. Murthy, what is your advice as potential Surgeon General?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, thank you, Senator. It is good to see you again as well. I love the spirit of what you are asking, which is how can we think bigger? How can we do better? How can we move faster? And what I would seek to do if I were serving as Surgeon General, sir, is work with the Administration to understand how we can expand capacity for distribution. One of the reasons we have the ability to distribute so much flu vaccine is we have engaged primary care providers in that network. And if we got more of our fellow physicians engaged in their offices and distribution—

Senator MARSHALL. Why are we reinventing the wheel? Let's just hit the backbone of the vaccinations, our doctors' offices, commu-

nity health departments, and pharmacies, right. Why do we need to reinvent the wheel? Let's get the vaccines in their hands.

Dr. MURTHY. Yes, so I think we can get more vaccines into pharmacies. I think we, especially with the Johnson and Johnson vaccine potentially coming on, that would be easier to store for clinicians and their offices and ultimately get into patients' arms.

Senator MARSHALL. Dr. Levine, any thoughts? Your advice?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. I mean, certainly we need to do everything we can to ramp up the vaccination program as much as possible. And I think the president has an excellent strategy, an excellent vaccine program to be able to accomplish that. They are having vaccines go to pharmacies through the vaccine program as well as to federally qualified health centers, as well as vaccine clinics.

But we do need to make sure that we get vaccines into arms. We also need to take into account the health equity issues that we were discussing before to make sure that we target vulnerable populations such as the African-American community, the Latino community, and rural communities so that they have access.

Senator MARSHALL. Of course. With the new big news saying that the vaccines we are already using already are 75, 80 percent effective with one shot, what type of advice would you be offering to getting, a greater number of people vaccinated right now as opposed to getting that second shot into the same person's arms? Dr. Murthy.

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, I thought that was really interesting data. And I think that because of the way the trials were done with the two dose model, while I think that is the foundation we should use. We should absolutely be quickly seeking to study what that one dose model could look like or a delayed second dose model. And if the data holds up that people achieve sustained protection not just for the first few weeks, but sustained protection, then I think that is a model that we absolutely should examine. I think science really has to guide us here. We have got to collect the data, get the knowledge, and then implemented in our policy.

Senator MARSHALL. Dr. Levine, any other?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, I would agree. I think that we need to stick to the two dose model now for the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines because that is how the studies are done, but then study other models to see if they could be effective.

Senator MARSHALL. But you said we are going to follow the science and the science says one shot is 80 percent effective. If our goal is to get herd immunity, why wouldn't you try to get more shots into more people? I am still prioritizing people at age 65, people with health care problems, etc. But why wouldn't you follow that science?

Dr. LEVINE. Right now, the FDA approval recommends two doses. I think we need to look at the science that you are discussing and have more studies in that regard. But I also share everyone's enthusiasm about the Johnson and Johnson—

Senator MARSHALL. You think following the FDA guidelines is a good idea as well. Last question on kids in school. I want to know what your opinion is. You follow the science. American Academy

pediatrician says kids can go back in school. What is your opinion? Should kids be back in school now?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, we certainly want to get children back in school as quickly as possible, Senator. The CDC has spoken about that. But I am interested in the American Academy of Pediatrics literature that you are referring. And if confirmed, I look forward to collaborating with Dr. Lewinsky—

Senator MARSHALL. But you don't have a recommendation? Is that—is that a goal? Is that your goal? You think the kids should be in school now or is there not enough science to say that kids should be in school yet?

Dr. LEVINE. I think that we all want children to be in school in a safe way, sir.

Senator MARSHALL. Dr. Murthy, I mean, what is your opinion? Is there enough science to say the kids should be in school now?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, I do think we have a growing amount of data that tells us how to get kids back in school safely, and tells us that if kids are masked, if there are distanced, if we have good ventilation in schools, that we can actually do a pretty good job of reducing transmission in school. And on top of that, if we can get teachers vaccinated, if we can get testing in schools, that can even further reduce the risk.

Senator MARSHALL. I am out of time, but I certainly want to publicly thank all the teachers that are in school, that are out there. We are focusing on the ones that aren't. But I am so grateful for the teachers that are out there on the front line teaching and just what we can do to empower them to get our kids back in school. Thank you and I yield back.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

We will go to Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. Thank you, Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr. And thank you so much to Dr. Levin and Dr. Murthy for being with us today and your willingness to engage in public service, particularly in this way, which is just so important to our country right now. As Senator Kaine said so powerfully, we are in the midst of a tragic loss of life and a pandemic that has totally upended our economy and our health, and our sense of well-being. And I know that you both understand this. And so I am just grateful for your willingness to serve in this way. You know, I am always reminded of something that a Minnesota farmer said to me earlier last year. He said, when it comes to COVID-19, we are all in the same storm, but we are not all in the same boat.

I think that this gets at the ways in which COVID has magnified the inequities that already existed in our society. So I am so grateful for your willingness to serve, Dr. Levine. And I also want to say how much I appreciate the dignity and the professionalism that you demonstrated in your response to Senator Paul as a physician and as a public servant. And I want to be really clear that this is a moment where we should be focusing on the grave challenges before us. And one of these challenges is that LGBTQ people have long faced discrimination and barriers to healthcare, and they are much more likely than non LGBTQ+ people to lack access to insurance and to affordable medical care.

We need advocates at all levels to make sure that we address that inequity, and we fight against discrimination and ensure that everybody, all patients, have access to care, especially amid this crisis, which has revealed so many inequities. So I wanted to thank you. Dr. Murthy, when you and I spoke, we had a great conversation about the listening tour that you did when you were Surgeon General the first time, and you talked about how you went out and you expected to hear people's concerns, health concerns, and you instead discovered this theme of Americans feeling lonely and isolated.

We talked a little bit about this broad based social isolation that is happening right now among older adults, among kids that are not able to be in school among so many people. And this is something that I know we both care a lot about because of the direct impacts that social isolation can have on people's health. This lack of social connection is not just about being lonely. It is about the direct impact on people's long term health outcomes.

Dr. Murthy, could you talk a little bit more about this and maybe say a bit about how you expect to continue to work on the issue of social isolation, and what we can do in Congress to help? And how we can incorporate some of these ideas into our thinking about healthcare?

Dr. MURTHY. Senator, thank you so much for that question. I really enjoyed our conversation on that topic of isolation and loneliness as well. This was one of the unexpected things for me that came up during my service as Surgeon General. I expected when I began my listening tour to understand what was on the minds of Americans, everywhere that I would hear about issues like obesity and substance use and depression and anxiety. And I did hear about those concerns. But what I heard so often were stories of loneliness and isolation from not just elderly individuals who are living alone, but I heard them from college students on uncrowded campuses, from moms and dads, from teachers, from doctors and nurses, and even from some Members of Congress who told me behind closed doors that they, too, struggled with loneliness.

These stories resonated with me because I had seen so much loneliness in my patients, patients who had often come in by themselves. And even in the moments of extraordinarily difficult, hard decisions about treatment, we would have to have that conversation alone with them because they had no one who could come in and be a part of that conversation. And I also experienced a lot of loneliness as a child. So that experience is very, very raw still and present in my mind. But what was concerning to me as Surgeon General where the health consequences also.

The fact that the increasing body of data showing that loneliness is associated with an increased risk of premature death and heart disease, as well as other conditions like depression and anxiety. There is a lot we can do, starting with communities, faith organizations, other community organizations have a powerful role they can play in helping to stitch together the fabric of a more connected society. Clinicians, doctors and nurses can also play a powerful role in surfacing issues like loneliness, which are unfortunately stigmatized and which people struggle with but don't feel comfortable

talking about. And finally, Government does have a helpful role it can play too.

When Government chooses to name an issue as important, when it convenes people to come together and build a strategy to address an issue, it can have a powerful effect on moving the needle on the actions we take. We have seen that with opioids and with other issues. So this would be an issue I would love to work on with you and with other Members of Congress that affects people all across our country and has significant health impacts.

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much, Dr. Murthy.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

We will turn to Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Murthy, it was good to speak with you some weeks ago. I appreciated that. Dr. Levine, I look forward to our conversations as well. I—in my conversation, Dr. Murthy, we talked about the disparities that we see in our rural areas. Know that, again, that will continue to be a pressing, pressing issue for me. I just came from a gathering of Arctic parliamentarians by way of Zoom, and one of the things that we were focusing on in our discussions was what we are seeing in the Arctic nations, not only during COVID, but prior to COVID. And these are the issues of mental health, just general behavioral health issues. And our reality that during this pandemic, we are seeing rising levels of substance abuse.

We are seeing rising levels of suicide, particularly among our youth. And I raise this again to ask your commitment, your focus to not only mental health in a pandemic, at a time of global pandemic, but really moving forward and how we can address these mental health needs in areas where we already have disparities with access to all kinds of medical services. So if you can speak very briefly to the mental health as it relates to substance abuse, suicide, and in some of the other, again, very troubling realities that we are facing right now.

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, it is good to see you again as well, and thank you for that question. The issue of mental health broadly is obviously deeply concerning. It is an issue that I have dealt with as a clinician, that I have seen as a Surgeon General. But the impact in rural communities in particular has been heartbreaking. I had a window into the disparities that exist in rural communities through my father, actually early in life. He grew up in a small village half a world away in India. But interestingly, many of the stories he told me hold true in America that rural areas often have disparate access to healthcare as well as to education and economic opportunities.

When I was Surgeon General, Senator, when I visited Alaska in particular, when I visited Oklahoma and other rural areas, I saw firsthand that those disparities were real and that the access to mental health care through telehealth, the access—the ability to have access to providers as well in person was often far reduced in an environment where we just didn't have sufficient access to resources.

One of the things I would love to do if I have the privilege of serving is to work with you and to work with other Senators to see how we can close the gap that exists in rural communities when

it comes to mental health care by providing not only better telehealth and telemedicine, but also by working to strengthen our workforce of mental health providers, which are often in scarce supply.

I believe we can do that in part by investing in community health centers, which are the backbone of communities all across this country, but which can help provide mental health resources as well.

Senator MURKOWSKI. When, as you know, the significance that they play in providing for care in Alaska throughout our state. I want to ask you about homelessness as a public health issue. We see growing areas of homelessness in my state. And it is a pretty tough place to be homeless, particularly this time of year where it is cold, and it is going to be cold for some time forward. But we are seeing this in so many areas of the country. My view is that there has been little focus on our public health authorities to research, to implement evidence based comprehensive strategies to address what we are seeing with regards to homelessness.

I think we are going to see more homelessness as a result of this pandemic. In your role, if you are confirmed as Surgeon General, what do we need to do to be raising the awareness to be not only becoming more aware, but actually working to address these, I believe, significant health issues as it relates to homelessness?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, I am glad you raised this. Of all the social determinants that we talk about with regard to health, housing and homelessness is one of the most powerful. It is something I saw firsthand as a doctor. I remember, Senator, one of the first patients I cared for who was homeless. I was a medical student at the time. And I remember talking to the patient as they were being discharged about the medications they needed to pick up from the pharmacy and the three follow-up appointments they needed to have.

At some point, I realized how foolish I was because their primary concern was where they were going to sleep that night. Not and all those other issues as to when they were going to follow-up in three weeks with cardiology were secondary and less likely to happen, unfortunately. I believe there is a powerful connection between housing and health. I think there is a growing body of data that tells us that. I think part of what we have to do is make sure that data and that science is clear and evident to the public and to policymakers. But when I was Surgeon General last time Senator, I also worked with HUD, with Housing and Urban Development, on in that case, a program and an approach to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.

That was just one example of how housing and health go together. And I would welcome the opportunity to do that again, to engage with HUD and with policymakers to see how we can put roofs over our heads, how we can reduce homelessness, recognizing that can improve health outcomes as well as people's overall experience.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, I would love to work with you on that. I would recognize, though, that through HUD, that is one avenue, obviously, to address the issues of homelessness. But so many are these invisible homeless that are in our community, particu-

larly our children, our families. And whether or not we have a—whether or not HUD is best able to respond to these issues of kids who are couch surfing, who are technically homeless, what the structure is to best address them. I am over my time and I appreciate that, but this is a conversation I would love to follow-up with.

Dr. MURTHY. Well, thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Murkowski.

Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank both the doctors here today for your willingness to serve, your thoughtful responses. You know, I know being a doctor takes both intelligence and empathy, and I believe that the two of you possess both those important characteristics. So I appreciate you being here today. I want to have a question for each one of you. Mental health concerns, K through 12, kids, mental health concerns for seniors. So to both of you, tragically, Nevada has seen an increase in youth suicides throughout the pandemic. In our county school district, 18 students have taken their lives in just 9 months. Sadly, we are the highest in the Nation. The pandemic also has been particularly hard on seniors or most vulnerable to the virus.

We have talked about the social isolation, the tremendous toll that it takes. In Nevada, we have roughly about 370,000 seniors and 25 percent of those estimated to live alone. So to Dr. Levine, I will go first. I want to build upon Senator Murphy's question, a little bit on Senator Murkowski question. Given what is happening in Nevada, you have extensive experience addressing youth mental health needs, how would you address the disturbing trends in youth suicides, mental health problems? I know that you have programs and public—and services in Pennsylvania that help out with the students. And so what would you do for our youth experiencing suicidal thoughts?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you so much for that question. I enjoyed our conversation a number of days ago very much about this and other issues. Clearly, mental health issues among our youth, remains a significant public health problem. As you pointed out in my career in academic medicine at the Penn State College of Medicine, I saw many troubled children and teenagers, some of whom were suicidal and required intensive treatment to treat some of their underlying mental health issues and other issues that were leading to those concerns and their suicidal ideation. I participated in a suicide task force, suicide prevention task force as part of my role as the Secretary of Health in Pennsylvania.

If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed to the role of Assistant Secretary of Health for the Nation, I look forward to collaborating with SAMHSA, collaborating with Dr. Murthy and other content experts, and then working with you on making sure that we can address this issue, which has just become exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. Next, I would like to address the senior issue. So, Dr. Murthy, many seniors have been really—continue to isolate in their homes. And as you suggest, senior health needs—we really have to think about the connection they have. They are missing people. They are missing that important touch.

Now we have COVID. We are not even allowed to hug people. We don't get to be close. And that isolation is so devastating. It causes a lot of depression and other kinds of health issues that follow that. So can you talk about the importance of the social plans that we can do, investing in meal programs, some kind of home visits, check ins, or those things that serve seniors, particularly in our rural areas where it might even be hard to get people out there?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, thank you for that question, and I think you have touched on an issue that is painful, frankly, for many families, which is the experience that seniors have of being lonely and isolated, especially during this pandemic, which I think is worse than that isolation for many of them. I think, Senator, I don't think it is often well appreciated in the general public just how profound an impact that isolation, loneliness has on health. And I think that is one place where as Surgeon General I would hope to bring some attention is just to the fact that social connection and loneliness is important, not just so we can feel better, but so we can do better in terms of our health.

But I think, second, there is a powerful role that community organizations can play. So often I find, and I found this was true when I was traveling the country as Surgeon General as well, that many organizations, because they don't have primary expertise in health, they think that they can't do anything to improve health outcomes. But organizations that can connect young people with the elderly for visits, that can provide food or resources to the elderly, that can simply call to check in on people who may be living alone, they can play a powerful role in helping people feel more connected in difficult periods of their life.

Addressing isolation that seniors experience, this is an all-in challenge that, yes, it does require Government attention, but also it requires communities to be engaged and recognize that they have incredible power when it comes to helping their seniors. But this is an area where I would love to certainly focus on with you and with your colleagues.

Senator ROSEN. No, I appreciate that. I know in my home community, there are groups at our university, there are groups in our faith based community that have just created these phone trees to call and check in on people. It was something everyone could do during the pandemic. So you are right, sometimes there is a grass-roots solution to help for some of the problems. Thank you. I have gone over my time. I appreciate you both being here.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

Senator Braun.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you, Madam Chair. During the whole COVID challenge, my observation has been especially coming from the business world so recently in a place like Indiana where I think we did a pretty good job with the navigation through the whole process, maybe didn't take so much a one size fits all approach, differentiated it a little bit by counties within the state, I thought that was something we should have done, and I think it did unfurl that way. I got a few questions about what you were able to do in your home state.

The idea that you treat all counties the same, both rural and urban, to me didn't quite make sense. And have you actually

looked at the results of the approach that was taken in your state in terms of that tradeoff between fighting the disease itself and the economic impact that would be concomitant with it if you took an approach that was going to be too draconian but didn't make sense. Have you been able to get through the data to see, are you happy with the way you handled it in your home state?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you very much for that question. I appreciate our discussion about this and other issues a number of days ago. You know, with this novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in the spring, there are basically three tools in the public health toolbox in order to address it. One is containment, which involves testing, contact tracing. The second is mitigation, at its heart mask wearing and social distancing and washing hands, but also some of the closures that you are discussing.

Then the third are medical countermeasures, including medications and vaccines, which, of course, were not available in the spring. Testing was also not particularly available in the spring. We had lack of personal protective equipment. So it was quite a challenging situation in the Northeast and in the mid-Atlantic. So mitigation was one of the biggest tools in the toolbox that we could use.

Pennsylvania actually did take, under Governor Wolf's leadership, a very sequential, iterative approach in terms of the business closures that we did. We did go county by county in terms of whether the businesses would be closed or not, and eventually the entire state did get closed. But it did go in that iterative approach. We also took a sequential iterative approach in terms of reopening with a red, yellow, green schema that did go county by county.

Senator BRAUN. Then have you actually done any metrics or compared—where is your unemployment rate currently in your state?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, sir, I actually don't know the current unemployment rate.

Senator BRAUN. I think you will find if you look across the country that there is a direct correlation. You look at a place like Florida that got a lot of heat early on, figuratively speaking, ends up having the most vulnerable population. And you did have an approach there where I thought it took a dual perspective of trying to keep the disease at bay and respected for all the peculiarities it had shown us, but also with the most susceptible population, has done a good job when you look at doing both. What about, very quickly, how has your vaccination rollout gone? Have you been pleased with the performance of getting vaccinations out in your state?

Dr. LEVINE. Pennsylvania, like many states initially had significant challenges in terms of the rollout of the vaccine over the holidays and then into a January, etc. Of course, I left the Pennsylvania Department of Health in January, so I have had no contact with the Pennsylvania Department of Health and don't really know what exactly differently they are doing now. I think Pennsylvania has had successes and has had challenges in terms of the vaccine rollout, but things are continuing to improve.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you. Dr. Murthy, just a question to the point. Do you think guns present a public health emergency?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, I think that gun violence, like any other form of violence, is a concern to me as a doctor who has taken care of many patients who have been the victims of violence, but I think the way we approach that issue, Senator, should be driven by science. I am grateful that Congress has in a bipartisan basis put funds to study the origins of gun violence and how best to address it. But I will tell you that my focus, Senator, is not on this issue. It is, and if I am confirmed, it will be COVID, on mental health, and on substance use disorders. These are the issues which I think are front and center in this moment. And it is where I would put my attention, if confirmed.

Senator BRAUN. I am about out of time, but since we have gone through and it looks like the health care crisis is, thank goodness, ebbing with the results we are seeing, this is an issue that I am sure will come to the forefront. And I will get with you later on that subject.

Dr. MURTHY. Okay, I look forward to it, Senator. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Lujan.

Senator LUJAN. Chair Murray, thank you so very much to you and to our Ranking Member, Mr. Burr. Thank you for this important hearing. Dr. Levine, it was a pleasure visiting with you recently. And Dr. Murthy, I look forward to our conversation. Dr. Murthy, understandably, the Federal Government has focused the bulk of its resources on slowing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, we have simultaneously addressed the secondary impacts. We have to get this done the pandemic, including a reported increase in opioid overdoses. As Surgeon General, you are considered the Nation's doctor. How will you guide discussions and scientific investment so that individuals who live with acute or chronic pain can get appropriate treatment, including non-pharmacological treatments such as physical therapy, and also if they do need pharmacological treatments, that they are not addictive?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, thank you, Senator, for that question. I think you are raising a critical issue here, which is how do we treat pain appropriately given how many Americans are living with some form of chronic pain? You know, I cared for many of these patients, when I was practicing medicine. I noticed how that pain can affect not only the quality of life of an individual, but their family as well. And I think what we have an obligation to do is to take what research currently tells us, which is that there are multiple strategies for addressing pain that are effective.

They include physical therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and, yes, in some cases, pharmacologic therapy with medicines. And we have to make these treatment strategies available to people. But right now, many people don't have access to physical therapy or cognitive behavioral therapy at the level that they need to help address chronic pain. And even when it comes to medications, these decisions have to be tailored or based on a patient's individual situation. And there is not a cookie cutter, one size fits all approach that we have to take here.

That is why we have got to empower clinicians to with the right knowledge, with the best and latest data so they can make good decisions with their patients to help ultimately address their pain.

Senator LUJAN. Appreciate that, Dr. Murthy. Dr. Levine, we had a chance to visit about mental, behavioral health. And you have been asked that question by several of our colleagues today. It matters to all of us across the country, especially in rural communities. So I am interested in what we can count on with your advocacy to increase access to mental behavioral health and then also a project that you are familiar with and that our Chair has championed in project ECHO in telehealth and telementoring, what your thoughts are with how we can expand those programs and also ensure that there will be reimbursement for both telehealth and telementoring services?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, thank you, Senator, for that question. And I particularly enjoyed our discussion about this and other issues a number of days ago. Clearly, mental health issues are going to be forefront as we work through the pandemic and afterwards. And this would include mental health issues for children and adolescents, as we have spoken about previously, but also adults and seniors, as was talked about as well. This is a particularly difficult issue in rural areas where there is lack of access to mental health services. And so I think telehealth is going to be very, very important. And that includes telepsychiatry and telepsychology. Of course, as we discuss broadband is often critical.

Access to broadband is critical to that success. I did want to highlight the program we talked about, which is called Project ECHO, which was founded by Dr. Arora in New Mexico. And I know that you actually know him. And I have had really the fortune of meeting him. There is a Project ECHO program in Pennsylvania, which is spearheaded by the Penn State College of Medicine and Penn State Hershey Health. And they have been using that in particularly for the Opioid Crisis and expansion of medication assisted treatment, but also other medical issues and mental health issues.

I think that telehealth and programs such as Project ECHO need to be further expanded. And if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other content experts and Dr. Arora on expanding it.

Senator LUJAN. I appreciate that. Dr. Murthy, populations that live in rural regions of the United States face unique challenges in accessing health care. These barriers contribute to the rural, urban divide phenomenon that leaves rural Americans with lower life expectancies than their urban counterparts. I believe everyone deserves access to high quality, affordable care, no matter where they live, what health insurance they have, or how much money they make.

One of the first areas I think we need to address is the current caps and other limitations on rural residency programs that have put rural America at a disadvantage. Dr. Murthy, how can we work together to address the shortage of health providers in rural areas and increase Federal support for rural residency programs?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. I do think that we do—we have critical workforce shortages in rural areas and those include primary care shortages, but also special-

ists. And I think programs like Project ECHO, which I had the privilege of visiting, you know, in New Mexico when I was Surgeon General, are programs that can actually help to close that gap to some extent. But we have to do more because virtual care, while critical, is only part of that solution.

We need to train more clinicians and bring them to rural areas. And we can do that in part through expansions of the National Health Service Corps. We can do that, actually, I believe by also better utilizing the U.S. Public Health Service Commission Corps, which I was privileged to oversee as Surgeon General, which as it is, provides a lot of care in rural areas, but certainly is poised to step up and do more.

I do think that there are ways we can do this and with residency programs as well, I think we can strategically work to train residents and place them ultimately in rural parts of our country that are in desperate need of medical providers. I would certainly love to work with you on this issue. I think health care providers get into health care wanting to relieve suffering and to serve. I think the areas that so often need service our rural areas, but they are not getting the providers that they need.

Senator LUJAN. Thank you for the time today, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much. We will now turn to Senator Romney, who I understand gets the patients award today for sitting there.

Senator Romney.

Senator ROMNEY. Don't seem to be able to get there. My mic goes on—the light doesn't but the mic does. Thank you for being here today. I appreciate Senator Murray giving me this opportunity. Dr. Levine, are there school districts that are open in Pennsylvania and some that are closed?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for your—

Senator ROMNEY. We are short of time, so are there school districts, some open, some closed?

Dr. LEVINE. There are some school districts which are remote and some school districts which are in person.

Senator ROMNEY. Okay. Has there been a public health analysis to see those that have been opened? Has there been a massive spread of COVID that is different than those that have stayed hybrid or are all remote?

Dr. LEVINE. I am not aware of that analysis, but—

Senator ROMNEY. Okay, that is my impression as well, which is across the country, we have had some school districts open, meaning kids going to school, others absolutely closed, kids only going on remote. The evidence doesn't show so far that those that have been having kids in classrooms aren't seeing a spike in COVID cases. There are also countries that kept their schools open. They haven't seen a spike in COVID cases. I don't understand why our schools are still closed.

There are some of us who feel it is a submission to the teacher's unions, and because they are such big donors to the Democratic Party that the Administration is saying, oh, we are not—it's at state levels and at the Federal level we are not going to push to get our schools open. But, grocery store workers are working, drug-

store workers, taxi drivers, EMS workers, health care workers. But there is just as much a priority for our kids to be educated.

I just can't understand why, given the fact that the data doesn't show that there is a problem for teachers or for families having kids going to school, we have to get our kids into school. The Administration is proposing \$170 billion going to education as part of the \$1.9 trillion COVID program, but only 5 percent of that is getting spent in this year. 95 percent is for years down the road. It has nothing to do with getting our kids safe and our schools open again. I just—I don't understand why the Administration does not directly encourage all of our school districts to open again. And if we are going to send out \$170 billion, which I don't support, but if we are going to send \$170 billion, it ought to be linked to them agreeing to get the doors open and get the kids back in the classroom.

That is my chance to make a point and hopefully you will take that point to the Administration in the responsibilities you have. Let me ask a question, Dr. Murthy, and that is, you have had concern, as I have, about kids vaping. And the analysis shows that about one quarter, I guess, of high school kids are vaping on a regular basis, tobacco products and in many cases marijuana as well, particularly at the higher grades for marijuana. What can we do to get the flavored vaping products off the market? That is what kids are getting into. This has been slow rolled by the prior administration.

I think the prior administration was so concerned about the vaping shops and the adults that wanted to use the flavored products that they slow rolled this. But how are we going to get vaping products that are flavored off the marketplace, so we don't addict our kids to nicotine?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, thank you for that question, and it is good to see you. You were my Governor in Massachusetts when I first moved there for medical training. So it is nice to see you.

Senator ROMNEY. I take full credit for that.

[Laughter.]

Dr. MURTHY. Thank you. Listen, I share your passion for this subject. When I was Surgeon General, I issued the first Federal report on e-cigarettes and youth. And I still am deeply concerned that while we have seen some improvement in numbers, that there are still millions of children who are exposed to nicotine through vaping. I think that while we have taken some steps, especially at a state level, to restrict access to youth, and while we have laws saying that kids shouldn't be using this, that they are still a lot of loopholes through which kids are accessing e-cigarettes.

I also worry about the advertising, Senator, especially online advertising, which is the easy way for these companies to get their products to kids. So if I have the privilege of being confirmed, I will certainly look forward to working with you and with the Administration in ensuring that we are taking steps to protect our kids from advertising to enforce these types of rules. And even though the Surgeon General doesn't have policymaking authority, I do think that there are parents that I encountered all across this country who are concerned about exactly what you said about why are there kids using nicotine based products.

This would be an area I would love from a public education standpoint to work with you. And I think there is a lot of progress we have made, but so much more we have got to do to protect our kids.

Senator ROMNEY. I appreciate that. And I know that part of this process is typically some throw away lines that we all use, which is look forward to working with you on something, but then we never see each other. But this is one I really do care about. And I really hope that you will be able to work with the Administration and the FDA that obviously has regulatory authority in this regard to say, guys, you have got to push this faster, we have got to move ahead.

The analysis paralysis that goes on in Government is something which the private sector could never abide. And we have to get this addressed because it is a public health emergency. I am sorry, Dr. Levine. My time is up. I couldn't get you to respond to that as well but thank you. Madam Chair, back to you.

Senator BURR. Senator Hassan.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you very much. Let's try that—better. Thank you very much to our Chair and to our Ranking Member and to our nominees. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your continued willingness to serve and thank your families for us too because it is a joint commitment, I understand. I wanted to start with a little bit of a follow-up. Senator Lujan asked you about the opioid epidemic, and this is a question to both of you. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated what already was a devastating mental health and substance misuse crisis in our country.

I am encouraged that you both have knowledge and experience in combating the Opioid Crisis through expanding access to substance misuse treatment and services and working to diminish the stigma that is still too often associated in particular with heroin. Dr. Levine, as Secretary of Health for Pennsylvania, you led the state's effort to combat the opioid epidemic for several years. Can you please speak to the importance of continued robust Federal funding for states as we work to turn the tide of the opioid epidemic?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you so much for that question. I appreciate our discussion about this and other topics tremendously a number of days ago. You are entirely correct. The opioid epidemic, the Opioid Crisis and overdoses continues. It has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 crisis and we have to continue to address this robustly. In Pennsylvania, we worked on prevention with a concept I call opioid stewardship, with opioid prescribing guidelines, a robust prescription drug monitoring program, etc., with rescue, we have the medicine naloxone, and an expansion of treatment, particularly medication assisted treatment.

We do have to get past the stigma associated with that. All of those programs required funding. We needed funding for our prevention efforts. We needed funding for naloxone and for further distribution of naloxone, and then we needed funding for treatments. One of the programs we founded was called Pennsylvania Coordinated Medication Assisted Treatment, a hub and spokes model funded by the SOR funding.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, with the rest of the Members of Congress, and with SAMHSA on continuing the absolutely essential, sustainable funding for the Opioid Crisis.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you very much. And Dr. Murthy, if confirmed, how would you use your role to combat the Opioid Crisis and address the challenges in that crisis that have been exacerbated by COVID-19?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, thank you, Senator Hassan, for that question. You know, I think the opioid epidemic continues, unfortunately, to be a dire crisis for our country. I think that there are a few things, if I was confirmed, I would look to focus on building on the 2016 Surgeon General's report that we issued on alcohol, drugs, and health. One would be to continue to focus on public education, recognizing that there is still an extraordinary amount of stigma around the Opioid Crisis, which prevents people from coming forward and getting help. The second thing that I would look to do is to take some of the core recommendations around treatment, particularly access to medication assisted treatment, but also integration with primary care and work with policymakers to see how we could advance treatment. And third, I would say, is to focus on prevention.

Senator, in that report in chapter three, we actually laid out a number of prevention programs which have been proven to work to be cost effective as well, to return far more dollars in terms of reduce health care costs, criminal justice costs, and economic productivity losses than the initial investment in those programs. But those are still not well known, and they don't always often receive the investment they need. So those would be a few areas that I would love to focus on with regard to addressing the Opioid Crisis.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you for that and I look forward to working with both of you on it. I want to turn to a different question, Dr. Murthy. Even as we expand access to COVID-19 vaccines, we face the continued risk of additional spread within communities and the emerging threat of new COVID-19 variants. Experts have been clear, one of the best ways to bring an end to the pandemic is to continue to wear a mask in public, avoid indoor gatherings, and maintain social distancing.

Dr. Murthy, given the pandemic fatigue many people are understandably experiencing, how do you plan to use your platform to ensure that Americans continue to adhere to public health guidelines even as vaccinations continue until we are really, truly able to get the virus and its variants under control?

Dr. MURTHY. Senator, it is a great question. And I think, to be honest, a lot of us are experiencing the fatigue from the pandemic. I certainly am as well. I know a lot of us have been struggling for the last year, although, many certainly much, much harder that have had much more difficult experiences and others. I think there are a couple of things that I would seek to do, Senator. Number one, I think we do need to be consistent in our communication around the value and the importance of masks and we have to follow—we have to lead by example in demonstrating that they work, and they are important to wear.

But the second thing I think is recognizing that fatigue is real, and it is not a reason to judge people. It is real. We are human

beings. We are tired. That means that the faster we can also get people vaccinated, the more quickly we can return to a state where we can see each other. Where we don't have the distance, or we don't have to wear masks all the time.

That is why I would also focus my efforts on the vaccine, on getting it to people, and making sure people understood clearly what the benefits are so that they can make good decisions for themselves and their families.

Senator HASSAN. Well, thank you for that answer. Thank you to the Chair and Ranking Member. I will also just add that I would love to work with you and Senator Romney and others on the vaping issue, because I think people are not understanding the connection now we are seeing between teenage vaping and cigarette use later in life. And I very much look forward to working with both of you on that. Thank you.

Senator BURR. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Ranking Member. Thank you for being here today. Most of them have asked most of my questions. I will try to make it short, make a little bit of statement. I have been in education for 40 years. I have seen a lot of words put into protecting our kids from drugs, opioids, marijuana, all those and we don't seem to do a lot about it. And I am glad, Dr. Murphy, I heard you say something about education. And after 40 years of experience, that's what has got to be done. We have got to put education—we have got to put money behind it. And it is getting worse and worse. Now that we have opened our borders it is going to get even worse. And I feel for our kids. I really do. They are looking for something else, something different.

Again, dealing with 17 to 24 year olds for 40 years. It is different every day, but we got to find an answer. We have got to find a solution because it is not going to get any better by just saying it will go away on its own. We are losing 50,000 to 60,000 kids a year dying of overdose. And that is—we talk about COVID and it is our biggest problem now, but we have to do something. I live in Alabama.

We have lost 14 rural hospitals in the last 10 years because we are losing nurses and doctors. We don't have enough, we don't have enough hospitals to take care of our patients. Dr. Murphy, for you, other than telemedicine, which we are using, what can we do? You know, the thing about it, the only thing we have now in our rural areas is our pharmacies.

Now those are starting to go under because if you think about it, that is really our hospital and our doctor and our consultant for healthcare in rural areas. But these PBMs are absolutely putting our pharmacies under because they are the middleman between the drug companies and the pharmacies, and they are taking all the profits. But what else can we do in the rural areas?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, Senator, I think this is such an important point. And I realize that the challenges that you are speaking to in Alabama are likely being experienced in other rural areas in our country, too, that are struggling without enough health care providers, without—and they are watching rural hospitals closed down as well. There are a couple of things, Senator.

You know, in addition to telehealth, which you mentioned, the couple other areas I think we need to focus on is strengthening our rural health workforce. Where we see often clinicians get trained and then they relocate or stay in urban areas, and we don't have enough nurses and doctors in rural areas, but we can address that, I believe, through a combination of the National Health Service Corps, using the United States Public Health Service Commission Corps more effectively and expanding their role. I think we can do more there.

But the other place where I think we can do more Senators in supporting the rural hospitals themselves. I think the cost structure in rural areas, as you know, is different for healthcare than in urban areas. And you have to sometimes put more into base infrastructure to serve a smaller population because that is the nature of rural areas. If we apply a one size fits all model to rural and urban areas, rural areas will come up short and they won't get the support that they need. I think we have got to recognize that and build that into our funding support models as well.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Dr. Levine. You have worked in mental health and of course, being a football coach and an educator, I worked in mental health for 40 years because I see a lot of it. You know what I am talking about. And we seem to have, over the last 10, 12 years, more and more problems with mental health, with our young people. What do you think is the answer to that? And what is your first direction in your job would be to overcome some of that?

Dr. LEVINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. We do share a concern about young people and their mental health. And at Penn State Hershey Medical Center, I ran the adolescent medicine program where we saw many young people with medical issues as well as mental health issues. I think that we need to work on prevention, and we need to work on access for treatment. I think we need prevention programs to prevent mental health problems in our schools.

I think we need prevention programs in our communities and community health centers as well. And I think we need to increase access to treatment, whether that is in urban areas, suburban areas, or rural areas. We need more mental health professionals. We certainly need more child and adolescent psychiatrists, but not only psychiatrists. We need psychologists, psychiatric social workers and really the whole spectrum of mental health workers to be able to treat our young people who are suffering from these mental health issues.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Basically, what you are saying is we need a plan.

Dr. LEVINE. Yes, sir. We need funding.

Senator TUBERVILLE. We need funding. We need a plan. And I have never seen that in mental health in all my years and in being around kids. You know, we had to look for somebody to help with mental health problems. One other question, Dr. Murthy, you have been through this job one time. What is your number one priority that you have feel like that you can do better at this time?

Dr. MURTHY. Well, sir, I have had the privilege of serving once before, you are right. And the reason I am back, Senator, is be-

cause my priority first and foremost is to address COVID, to turn this pandemic around. There are issues that have been worsened by COVID, mental health and substance use disorders, and those are my accompanying priorities as well. But we have got to turn this pandemic around first and foremost.

Sir, to me, this is very personal. I have lost seven family members to COVID, most recently my uncle in Dallas a few weeks ago. I look at my children, my older one, my son is doing remote learning as well, desperately wants to be back with other kids, but can't. And there are many families I know that are struggling much more than we are. I want those families to be able to get back to their lives. I want our kids to be able to get back to school.

I want people to be able to go to work and not worry every day that they are going to catch the virus and get sick. I want us to be able to come together as a community again, Senator. That is what has brought me back to public service. It is why I hope to have the opportunity to serve our country once again.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Both your jobs are very important. And COVID is—I have lost friends. It is sad what we have gone through. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel, but we have seen drugs and mental health problems just continue to soar. We have to put money in education. I think Dr. Levine will agree with me on that. We have to do something, but we can't continue to say it will go away.

COVID, hopefully we will get it go away. These other two, they are not going anywhere. And it is all about educating our kids at a young age, at a very—and not starting when they have already had a problem. Thank you all today. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much. Senator Burr, I will turn it over to you for closing.

Senator BURR. Thank you, Chair Murray. And I want to thank our nominees today for your time, for your personal stories, and for the expertise that you bring to the nomination. Senator Murray, I would like to ask unanimous consent this time to put into the record, even though I don't have it in my possession while I sit here, one of the latest high school data relative to marijuana use and to vape products. What I think that latest data showed was that in high school students, marijuana was used more than vape product. That vape product in that category by high school students, that the least used flavor was menthol. Today, menthol is the only flavor on the marketplace. All the rest of them are gone.

The decision by the last administration to allow menthol to remain was in hopes that those that use combustible—adults could use combustible products could make the transition off of combustible cigarettes to a vape product as a way to fulfill harm reduction, which is the full intent of the vape products and other cessation programs. So, Senator Murray, I would ask unanimous consent that when I can get that data today, I can put it into the record.

The CHAIR. If you have that information, so ordered.

[The information referred to can be found on page 228.]

Senator BURR. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you so much. That will end our hearing for today. Dr. Murthy, Dr. Levine, thank you both for joining us to talk

about your experience and your thoughtful answers on how you will work with all of us to end this pandemic and improve health equity and make progress on so many other public health challenges. I would like to thank all of my colleagues on the Committee for participating in today's hearing as well.

Given the urgency of this moment, I will be pushing to get both of these nominees confirmed quickly so they can hit the ground running. And I hope colleagues from across the aisle will be with us to do that.

For any Senators who wish to ask additional questions of the nominees, questions for the record will be due by Friday, February 26 at 5 p.m. The hearing record will remain open for 10 days to Members who wish to submit additional material for the record. We will have a hearing on the ongoing response to COVID-19 pandemic soon. Details will be announced in the coming days. With that, the Committee stands adjourned.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR THE NOMINATION OF VIVEK MURTHY TO
SERVE AS MEDICAL DIRECTOR IN THE REGULAR CORPS OF THE PUB-
LIC HEALTH SERVICE AND SURGEON GENERAL OF THE PUBLIC
HEALTH SERVICE



3800 Kilroy Airport Way
Suite 100, P.O. Box 22616
Long Beach, CA 90801-5616

TEL 562.989.5100
FAX 562.989.5200

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION: elizabeth_letter@help.senate.gov

February 25, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, and Labor (HELP)
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 202-224-5375

Dear Senator Murray,

As CEO of SCAN Health Plan¹ and a practicing primary care physician, I am writing in support of Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination as the next U.S. Surgeon General. I have known Dr. Murthy for over two decades, and have had the privilege of working with him as a colleague at the Brigham and Women's Hospital. I believe that Dr. Murthy's previous tenure as U.S. Surgeon General under the Obama Administration, commitment to tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, and personal compassion makes him the right person for the job at this critical time in our country.

First, Dr. Murthy is a renowned leader with experience in responding to national health crises. As a former Vice Admiral in the Public Health Service Commissioned and previous U.S. Surgeon General under the Obama Administration (2014-2017), he led efforts on the opioid crisis and Ebola virus. Dr. Murthy clearly has the skills and expertise to excel as Surgeon General.

Second, Dr. Murthy is committed to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, having experience with it professionally and personally. During President Biden's transition, he co-chaired the coronavirus advisory team. He also knows first-hand the suffering that millions of Americans are feeling because seven of his family members have died from COVID-19. Dr. Murthy has stated publicly that, if appointed Surgeon General, the pandemic would be his top priority.

Third, Dr. Murthy is a compassionate physician who will champion the needs of all populations. He understands the importance of addressing health equity and social needs. The pandemic has made it undeniably clear that not all Americans are receiving equitable care. We need a leader, such as Dr. Murthy, who will raise awareness and act to resolve current health disparities. As a researcher, Dr. Murthy examined the impact that social conditions can have on personal health. In 2020, he published a book about what both society and individuals can do to reduce loneliness.

In brief, Dr. Murthy's previous experience as U.S. Surgeon General, commitment to overcoming the COVID-19 crises, and compassion to serving all American makes him highly qualified to lead our nation's health efforts. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support of Dr. Murthy's nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sachin H. Jain".

Sachin H. Jain, MD, MBA, FACP
President and Chief Executive Officer
SCAN Group and SCAN Health Plan

¹ SCAN is a nonprofit health plan that serves over 220,000 Medicare beneficiaries in California, making it the third largest nonprofit Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (MA-PD) plan in the country. Since 1985, SCAN has specialized in providing comprehensive, high quality care to the most vulnerable Medicare beneficiaries, including those who live with multiple chronic conditions, are eligible for nursing home care, and have trouble with performing activities of daily living. For beneficiaries who require additional attention, SCAN offers institutional, chronic care, and dual eligible special needs plans (SNPs). SCAN is proud to have earned a 4.5 Star Rating on a five-point scale from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in each of the last four years and to be named one of the best insurance companies for MA in California by U.S. News and World Report for the third straight year.



OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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 MARCHOFDIMES.ORG

February 26, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chairwoman
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 U.S. Senate
 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 U.S. Senate
 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of March of Dimes, the nation's leading non-profit organization fighting for the health of all moms and babies, I write to express our strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. It is vitally important to report Dr. Murthy's nomination to the full Senate as quickly possible so that he can fully engage in responding to the ongoing public health emergency caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

The U.S. Surgeon General provides vital counsel to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on public health and medical issues, in addition to serving as the head of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. As such, it has traditionally been the role of the Surgeon General to be "America's doctor," attuned to the health care needs and priorities of all Americans. The Surgeon General has singular opportunities to use his or her position to call attention to vital health issues, educate Americans, and help shape public discourse on the nation's health. Dr. Murthy possesses all the qualification and qualities for the position of Surgeon General. His extensive accomplishments in the medical, business and academic communities reflect a keen intellect, tremendous energy, and a passion to improve patient health. His combination of experience and expertise in these fields give him unique insights into both the challenges and opportunities facing our health care system.

Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and we believe he is well-positioned to serve the country again in this role. During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on topics such as obesity, mental health, childhood immunization, and addiction. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy also helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika, experience that will prove invaluable in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition will enable him to get started on day one to support the federal government's pandemic response.

Prior to his tenure as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy made valuable contributions through his service on the Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health, which advises the Secretary of Health and Human Services on the National Prevention Strategy and top preventive health priorities. Given his past experience with health education and grassroots organizing, Dr. Murthy can be expected to have an energetic social media presence, which is a vital tool for reaching and educating many Americans about a range of health issues. March of Dimes looks forward to working again with Dr. Murthy as Surgeon General on initiatives to address our nation's maternal and infant public health crisis.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer our strong support for Dr. Murthy's nomination. If we can provide additional information, please do not hesitate to contact KJ Hertz, Senior Director, Federal Affairs (khertz@marchofdimes.org, 571.969.8655).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rahul Gupta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rahul" and the last name "Gupta" clearly distinguishable.

Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, MBA, FACP
Senior Vice President & Chief Medical and Health Officer



Association of
American Medical Colleges
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20001-2399
T 202 828 0400
aamc.org

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

I write to express support of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) for the nomination of The Honorable Vivek Murthy, MD, as Surgeon General of the United States.

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 155 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; more than 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their more than 179,000 full-time faculty members, 92,000 medical students, 140,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences.

As you know, the Surgeon General not only oversees the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (USPHS) and the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps, but also provides Americans with the best scientific information available on how to improve their health and reduce the risk of illness and injury. Among other initiatives, during his tenure as the 19th Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy issued, "Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health," the first Surgeon General's report on addiction, and a call to action to health professionals around the opioid epidemic. This crisis has heightened in urgency in the last few years, particularly during the pandemic, and Dr. Murthy's leadership and experience will be essential.

For years, Dr. Murthy also has been outspoken about the public health implications of isolation, loneliness, and stress. This expertise will be particularly relevant during and after the COVID-19 pandemic to promote well-being within the general public and among frontline clinicians who have been serving their communities under harrowing conditions over the past year.

Both of these areas – preventing, identifying, and treating substance use disorders and supporting the well-being of our nation’s health care workforce and their communities – have been high priorities for the AAMC, and we look forward to working with Dr. Murthy to continue that work and other important efforts. With the wide range of public health and health care challenges facing the population, the AAMC believes that Dr. Murthy will offer a powerful vision for improving the health of people everywhere. We support his nomination and urge the Committee and the full Senate to vote to confirm him expeditiously. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David J. Skorton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being the most prominent.

David J. Skorton, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer
Association of American Medical Colleges

cc: The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader



March 12, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA), I write to urge the Committee to report the nomination of Dr. Vivek H. Murthy as Surgeon General of the United States swiftly and favorably to the full Senate. APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States with nearly 122,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students as members. Our mission is to advance the creation, communication, and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.

Dr. Murthy is uniquely qualified to serve as Surgeon General at this moment in our nation's history, given both his years of experience leading public health programs and his substantial expertise on the major public health challenges facing our country: COVID-19 and other viral diseases; opioid and other substance use disorders; mental health problems and social isolation; and health disparities. As a member of the President's COVID-19 Response Team, Dr. Murthy has helped coordinate the federal response to the pandemic and ensure that the negative mental health impacts of the pandemic are not forgotten. According to our recent Stress in America™ survey, people are experiencing more stress now than compared to any point during 2020, with 80 percent of respondents reporting the coronavirus pandemic is a significant source of stress in their lives. This was particularly acute among essential workers, who were more than twice as likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder since the beginning of the pandemic.¹ Dr. Murthy recognizes these realities and will be able to use the position of Surgeon General to address the growing mental health challenges facing the nation and the long-lasting effects of the pandemic in the years to come.

¹ American Psychological Association (2021). Stress in America: January 2021 Stress Snapshot. <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2021/stress-snapshot-january.pdf>.

During his previous tenure as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy dedicated significant time and energy to addressing the opioid epidemic, issuing the first ever Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health, and launching a national campaign to educate providers and the public about the importance of safe prescribing of opioids. Dr. Murthy has also been an outspoken proponent of addressing the impact of social isolation and loneliness on the well-being of individuals and communities. Research has shown that the effects of loneliness and isolation can be as damaging to health as other well-known risk factors, such as obesity and smoking.

Dr. Murthy recognizes the importance of suicide prevention and is willing to take a stand to protect the lives of those most at risk for suicide, including our nation's veterans. Approximately 60 percent of all firearm deaths in the U.S. are suicides, and suicide attempts using a firearm are the most likely to be fatal.² Veterans are more greatly impacted by firearm suicide, which accounts for nearly 70 percent of veteran suicide deaths.³ During his previous tenure as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy played a critical role in securing funding for research on firearm suicide prevention. Recently, to further address the issue of veteran suicide in particular, President Trump established the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) Task Force. The Task Force report included a recommendation to increase implementation of programs focused on lethal means safety, including increased access to safe storage and training for providers in firearm suicide prevention.⁴ Dr. Murthy's work in this extremely critical area, including a partnership with the Veterans Health Administration while Surgeon General, will be important in continuing to make strides to mitigate death by suicide.

Finally, Dr. Murthy has demonstrated a commitment to prevention and health improvement for all populations. Throughout his career, he has remained dedicated to addressing the health disparities that have been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Murthy understands that economic inequality, discrimination, stigma, and other social determinants of health are among the root causes of disparities we see among racial and ethnic minorities' access to health care services. As these populations continue to be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, Dr. Murthy's efforts to improve access to care and eliminate health disparities will be more important than ever for our nation.

In closing, we would like to thank you in advance for your serious consideration of Dr. Murthy for Surgeon General. Dr. Murthy is a well-respected public health expert whose decades of

² National Institutes of Health, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. (2020, September 30). *NIH awards grants for firearm injury and mortality prevention research* [Press Release]. <https://obssr.od.nih.gov/nih-awards-grants-for-firearm-injury-and-mortality-prevention-research/>

³ Department of Veterans Affairs 2020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. (2020). <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2020/2020-National-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Annual-Report-11-2020-508.pdf>

⁴ PREVENTS: The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide. (2021). The PREVENTS Roadmap. https://www.va.gov/PREVENTS/docs/PRE-007-The-PREVENTS-Roadmap-1-2_508.pdf

expertise are vitally needed as the nation faces a once-in-a-lifetime public health crisis. We urge the Committee move quickly to favorably refer Dr. Murthy's nomination to the full Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arthur C. Evans Jr.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD
Chief Executive Officer



February 23, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals who champion the health of all people and communities, I write to express our full support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to serve as surgeon general. The highly qualified Dr. Murthy's experience serving as the 19th surgeon general of the United States makes him an ideal candidate for this critical public health role as we work to protect the nation from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you know, the surgeon general has several important duties that include serving as the leader of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, chairing the National Prevention Council and serving as the nation's doctor to communicate the best scientific information available on health promotion and disease and injury prevention. I am confident that Dr. Murthy is fully prepared to once again serve our nation in these three critical roles and to advise the president and other members of the admiration on other important public health issues including the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under Dr. Murthy's leadership, the Corps played a significant role in protecting the public during the Ebola and Zika outbreaks and in protecting the public during the Flint water crisis. His past experience is essential as the Corps will continue to play an important role in protecting the health of the nation during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. During his time as surgeon general, he also focused his efforts on addressing a number of critical public health issues including the opioid crisis, the youth e-cigarette use epidemic and the need to increase physical activity to reduce the risk of chronic disease and premature death in the United States. APHA was pleased to work closely with Dr. Murthy on many of the important initiatives he led and we look forward to working with him once again on these and other pressing public health issues.

We strongly endorse his nomination and urge the Senate's swift confirmation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding our support for his nomination.

Sincerely,

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director

David Einhorn

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

As a business leader, investor, and philanthropist interested in addressing America's crisis of connection, I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Murthy is a highly qualified and passionate leader and internal medicine physician with many years of public health experience. Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and we believe he is well-positioned to serve the country again in this role.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on topics such as obesity, mental health, loneliness, childhood immunization, and addiction. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy also helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika, experience that will prove invaluable in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition will enable him to get started on day one to support the federal government's pandemic response.

In recent years, I have become concerned about America's growing crisis of connection, characterized by increasing loneliness, polarization, division, dehumanization, and fear. Dr. Murthy's research and writings—including his book *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*—have been a key source of knowledge on this issue and as Surgeon General he will be instrumental in advancing the science and practice of empathy, mutual understanding, and relationship building.

There is a community of scholars, practitioners, and civic leaders who are looking forward to partnering with Dr. Murthy to address loneliness right now. I encourage you to learn more by reading this recent opinion piece in *The Hill* by Professors Marc Brackett (Yale University), Niobe Way (New York University), and Rick Weissbourd (Harvard University).

I appreciate the opportunity to offer my strong support for Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



David Einhorn



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 136,700 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to [again](#) support the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. for the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a well-respected physician with decades of public health experience, who will again serve the country well in this role.

As an internal medicine physician, Dr. Murthy knows firsthand the important role that primary care physicians play in ensuring access, addressing health disparities, and has been a strong advocate supporting high quality affordable care for all. All of these have been long-time priorities of the AAFP.

In November 2019, Dr. Murthy was named co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board to help the incoming Biden administration coordinate its response to the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). In this capacity, he helped develop the federal government's pandemic response and speed up vaccine production and distribution, which AAFP has advocated for as well as the inclusion of primary care in vaccine distribution. This experience will allow Dr. Murthy to immediately help lead the federal government's response to the ongoing pandemic.

Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017. During this time, Dr. Murthy lead several public health initiatives to improve the nation's overall health, including the national response to the opioid crisis, the rising use of e-cigarettes, and mental health challenges. He also led the U.S. Public Health Service and its Commissioned Corps, managing the nation's response to Ebola and Zika as well as the Flint, MI drinking water crisis.

In Dr. Murthy's career as the 19th Surgeon General, a physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital, and as an instructor at Harvard Medical School, he has demonstrated many important leadership qualities that will contribute to his success as the 21st Surgeon General. Perhaps the two most important are a clear belief in the importance of preventive health and the ability to communicate the principles of effective health care to a wide and diverse population. As the "nation's doctor," the Surgeon General is particularly important in bringing to Americans the message of preventive health. With Dr. Murthy's active role on the National Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion and Integrative and Public Health, he has shown his ability and commitment to deliver that message, and to do so effectively.

STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

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February 24, 2021
Page 2 of 2

Dr. Murthy is an innovative leader, who has established two non-profit organizations to promote health care and one technology company to improve the quality and efficiency of clinical trials. By showing that he has the skills needed to bridge generations and diverse groups of people, he will be a Surgeon General who will appeal to Americans of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support for the nomination of Dr. Murthy for Surgeon General. If you have additional questions, please reach out to John Aguilar, Manager of Legislative Affairs, at jaquilar@aafp.org.

Sincerely,



Gary L. LeRoy, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair
American Academy of Family Physicians



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN PHYSICIANS

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February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

United States Senate Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

The Honorable Richard Burr Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

United States Senate Washington, DC 20510

On behalf of the Association of American Indian Physicians, I would like to express our support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a well-respected internal medicine physician specialist with decades of public health experience, who will again serve the country and American Indians and Alaska Natives well in this role. It is vitally important to report Dr. Murthy's nomination to the full Senate as quickly possible so that he can fully engage in responding to the ongoing public health emergency (PHE) caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

The Association of American Indian Physicians is a physician membership association largely comprised of American Indian and Alaska Native providers.

Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017 in exemplary fashion purposely extending outreach to American Indians and Alaska Natives. During this time, Dr. Murthy led several public health initiatives to improve nation's overall health, including the national response to the opioid crisis, the rising use of e-cigarettes, the health impacts of climate change, and mental health challenges, such as the detrimental effects of loneliness. Dr. Murthy also led the U.S. Public Health Service and its Commissioned Corps, managing the nation's response to Ebola and Zika as well as the Flint, MI drinking water crisis.

Dr. Murthy has extensive experience with protecting the public's health, including serving on the U.S. Presidential Advisory Council on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health; co-founding VISIONS Worldwide in 1995, a non-profit organization focused on HIV/AIDS education in India and the United States; and co-

founding TrialNetworks, an organization aimed at optimizing the quality and efficiency of clinical operations at each stage of a trial from feasibility through closeout.

AAIP strongly encourages the HELP Committee to swiftly report to the full Senate the appointment of Dr. Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectively,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Owen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mary Owen, MD (Tlinkit)
President
Association of American Indian Physicians

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patricia Murray
 Chairwoman
 Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 154 Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Member
 Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 217 Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Letter Supporting the Confirmation of Dr. Vivek H. Murthy as U.S. Surgeon General

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

As the 19th Surgeon General of the United States, Vice Admiral Vivek H. Murthy amassed a **track record** of considerable accomplishment.

- He helped to curb outbreaks of Ebola, Zika and the Measles by providing timely, compelling and accurate information to the public on how to prevent and contain the spread of the diseases;
- He published seminal reports on physical activity, addiction and the threats of e-cigarettes to young people;
- He galvanized parents, health practitioners and community leaders to treat more than 9,000 children impacted by lead poisoning in Flint, Michigan;
- He brought about much-needed reforms to modernize the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps;
- He issued a directive to every single doctor and nurse practitioner in the country to stem the tide of the opioid epidemic by changing the way they prescribe pain medication;
- He called for an end to conversion therapy that has caused significant harm to LGBTQ Americans;
- He co-chaired the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, helping to marshal resources that improved government data collection and increased the communities' participation in federal programs; and
- He used the bully pulpit of his office to destigmatize mental health challenges and provide the public with the tools and resources to improve their emotional well-being.

He did all of this and much more in just the first half of a four-year term that was abruptly cut short in April of 2017 – the second shortest tenure of any Surgeon General in 150 years. As a private citizen, Dr. Murthy's mission continued as an author, consultant and highly valued medical practitioner whose advice and counsel helped shape public and private sector responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was that expertise that led President Joseph R. Biden to turn to Dr. Murthy as his top COVID-19 advisor.

Dr. Murthy is a **trusted** scientist with the experience and qualifications to lead our public health apparatus in this moment of global crisis. In a career that spans more than 25 years, he has built significant expertise, not only in medical science, but also community-based care, health equity, public interest technology and public health communications. He is a respected voice who has won bipartisan acclaim for his clear and thoughtful messages about how to improve the health of an individual, a community and the nation. As the first Asian American and the first Indian American to hold this position, he embodies the incredible contributions and achievements of countless immigrants and refugees from our communities - scientists and caretakers - who helped build one of the greatest health systems in the world.

We know Dr. Murthy. We have worked with him and have seen his compassion and integrity up close. He is a servant leader with the right **temperament** to earn and preserve the public's confidence. Now, more than ever, we need public health officials that the American people -- and, frankly, people across the globe -- can look to for reliable information on their health and the health of their communities. Dr. Murthy is that person. He was that person when he met with native people in Alaska and Black medical students in Tennessee. He was that person when he advised small business owners in Florida and college graduates in Arizona. He was that person when he cycled with police officers who were part of a mobile Naloxone unit in Washington State and when he launched a listening tour in North Carolina. He is always that person.

Therefore, we the undersigned community leaders and advocates representing the interests of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, respectfully ask you to confirm Dr. Vivek H. Murthy to serve as the 21st Surgeon General of the United States.

Sincerely,

Bel Leong-Hong
Chair, Democratic National Committee AAPI Caucus
Gaithersburg, MD

Adrienne George, Member
DNC & AAPI Caucus Member, Democrats Abroad
Sweden, SE

Amy Fan
Co-Chair, Taiwanese Americans for Progress

Amy Watanabe
Co-chair, Japanese Americans for Biden
Los Angeles, CA

Angelito Tenorio
Chair, Democratic Party of Wisconsin AAPI Caucus (ad hoc status)
West Allis, WI

Anis Ahmed
National Director, Bangladeshis for Biden National Council
North Potomac, MD

Anita Somani
Co-chair, Physicians Action Network
Columbus, OH

Anne Shaw
Co-Chair, Women of Color Coalition
Chicago, IL

Aryani Ong
Co-Chair, Chinese Americans for Biden
Washington, DC

Ashley Cheng
DNC Member
Austin, TX

Barbara Goldberg Goldman
Co-Chair, Democratic Women of Maryland Action Network
Potomac, MD

Benjamin Oh
Co-Chair, Young Asian Americans for Biden
Philadelphia, PA

Brad Jenkins
Founder, RUN AAPI
Washington, DC

Brooke Lierman
Community Activist
Baltimore, MD

Cam T. Ashling
Chair, Georgia Advancing Progress PAC (GAPPAC)
Atlanta, GA

Cam T. Ashling
Chair, Asian American Action Fund - GA Chapter
Atlanta, GA

Caroline Fan
Communications Director, Asian American Action Fund

St. Louis, MO

Chrissy Erguiza
Member, Democratic Party of Oregon's Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus
Portland, OR

Cora Quisumbing-King
Co-chair, New Hampshire Democratic Partic Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus
Dover NH

Dan Santos
Chair, AAPI Democratic Caucus of Nevada
Las Vegas, NV

David Lee
Co-Chair, Texas AAPI Victory Project
Houston, TX

David Lee
President, Texas Signal
Houston, TX

Deepa Sharma
Treasurer, California Democratic Party Asian Pacific Islander Caucus
Lafayette, CA

Devang Shah
Member, Maryland Democratic Party AAPI Leadership Council
Rockville, MD

Dhaval Shah
Howard County Democratic Central Committee Treasurer
Columbia, MD

Doua Thor
Co-chair, Hmong Americans for Biden
Elk Grove, CA

Esther Lee
Former Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Commonwealth of Virginia
McLean, VA

Felipe Morales
LatinxVoice
Milwaukee, WI
Francey Lim Youngberg

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. of Department Housing and Urban Development
Alexandria, VA

Filipino Americans for Biden Harris

Gene Kim
National Co-Chair, Korean Americans for Biden
San Mateo, CA

Hana Mariah Hatta
State Committee - Democratic Party of Arkansas;
Little Rock, AR

Harini Krishnan
Member, California Democratic Party Delegate/Platform Committee
Hillsborough, CA

Hoan Dang
Past Chair, Maryland Democratic Party AAPI Leadership Council
Silver Spring, MD

Howard Chou
Firsts Vice Chair, Colorado Democratic Party
Denver, CO

Irene Bueno
Asian American Action Fund
Washington, DC

JC Chang
Co-Chair, Taiwanese Americans for Progress

Jerry Raburn
Co-chair, Thai Americans For Biden
Los Angeles, CA

Jill Nash
Co-Founder, Women for Biden Harris Digital
San Francisco, CA

Jonathon Rowland
Baltimore City Chair, Maryland Democratic Party AAPI Diversity Leadership
Council Baltimore, MD

Joshua Ang Price
President & Co-founder, AAPI Caucus

Little Rock, AR

Katie Nguyen Kalvoda
Founder, Asian Americans Rising
CA

Khyati Joshi
South Asian American Caucus Steering Committee Member, NJ State Democratic
Committee Wayne, NJ

Kishan Putta
Chair, District of Columbia AAPI Democratic Caucus
Washington, DC

Ling Luo
Founder, Asian Americans Democratic Club
Houston, TX

Loren Nadres
Board Member, Asian American Action Fund
New York, NY

Maeley Tom
Former Member, DNC Executive Committee
Sacramento, CA

Mala Patel
Co-Founder, Asian American Action Fund - Tristate Chapter

Martha Love
DNC Member, Democratic Party of Wisconsin
Milwaukee, WI

May yer Thao
Co-Chair, Wisconsin AAPIs for Biden
Fox Point, WI

Melahat Rafiei
DNC Member, California Democratic Party
Orange County, CA

Melissa Ramoso
Chair, California Democratic Party Asian Pacific Islander Caucus
CA

Michael A. White

Member, DNC AAPI Caucus
Saipan, MP

Mike Fong
Former Chair, California Democratic Party API Caucus

MR Rangaswami
Founder, Indiaspora
San Francisco, CA

Murali Balaji
Co-Chair, Hindu Americans for Biden
Philadelphia, PA

Neha Dewan,
National Director, South Asians for Biden
New York, NY

Neil Makhija
Executive Director, IMPACT
Philadelphia, PA

Nisha Ramachandran
Chair, Desis for Progress
Washington, DC

Olivia Lee
Recording Secretary, Los Angeles County Democratic Party
Los Angeles, CA

Praveen Meyyan
Chair, Democratic Asian Americans of Virginia
VA

Priya Sundareshan
Caucus Lead, Arizona Democratic Party AAPI Caucus
Tucson, AZ

Rachel Green
Co-Chair, Women of Color Coalition
NJ

Rehan Reza
Chairman, Asian American Pacific Islanders Caucus of Kansas
Topeka, KS

Riju Das
Organizing Chair, Connecticut AAPI Democratic Caucus
Hartford, CT

S. Floyd Mori
Co-chair, Japanese Americans for Biden
Salt Lake City, UT

Sachin Chheda
High Ground Institute
Milwaukee, WI

Sachin H. Jain
Founder, South Asian Healthcare Leadership Forum
Los Angeles, CA

Sam Cho
President, Korean American Coalition of Washington
Seattle, WA

Sam Shim
Chair, Ohio Democratic Party Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus
Columbus, OH

Sangeeta Rao
Co-Chair, Arlington Dems AAPI Caucus
Arlington, VA

Sara Le Brusq
Interim President, New American Leaders Action Fund
New York, NY

Sean Hassan
Elected Trustee, Austin Community College, Board of Trustees
Austin, TX

Sim J. Singh
National Director, Sikh Americans for Biden
Washington, DC

Sumathi C. Madhure, Co-chair
New Hampshire Democratic Party AAPI Caucus
Nashua, NH

Toral Patel & Afsheen Shamsi
Co-chairs, New Jersey DSC South Asian American Caucus

NJ

Trung Ta
Chair, Vietnamese Americans for Biden
Huntington Beach, CA

Tyler Dos Santos-Tam
Chair, Democratic Party of Hawai'i
Honolulu, HI

Usha Reddi
Committeewoman, Kansas Democratic Party
Manhattan, KS

Vaibhav Jain
Co-chair, Jain Americans for Biden
White Plains, NY

Winnie Tang
President, Florida Asian Women Alliance
Miami, FL

Wylie Chen, Co-Chair
Chinese Americans for Biden
Washington, DC



February 10, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I would like to express our strongest possible support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a well-respected internal medicine physician specialist with decades of public health experience, who will again serve the country well in this role. It is vitally important to report Dr. Murthy's nomination to the full Senate as quickly possible so that he can fully engage in responding to the ongoing public health emergency (PHE) caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 163,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Internal medicine specialists treat many of the patients at greatest risk from COVID-19, including the elderly and patients with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

In November 2019, Dr. Murthy was named co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board to help the incoming Biden administration coordinate its response to the COVID-19 PHE. In this capacity, he aided in formulating the federal government's pandemic response regarding vaccine supply and distribution as well as the use of the Defense Production Act (DPA). The Biden administration has since used the DPA to help speed up response, including vaccine production. This experience and familiarization will allow Dr. Murthy to immediately hit the ground running to help lead the federal government's response to the COVID PHE.

Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017 in exemplary fashion. During this time, Dr. Murthy lead several public health initiatives to improve the nation's overall health, including the national response to the opioid crisis, the rising use of e-cigarettes, the

health impacts of climate change, and mental health challenges, such as the detrimental effects of loneliness. Dr. Murthy also led the U.S. Public Health Service and its Commissioned Corps, managing the nation's response to Ebola and Zika as well as the Flint, MI drinking water crisis.

Prior to being Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy was an esteemed faculty member at Harvard Medical School and hospitalist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. He was a strong advocate for making health insurance coverage available to all Americans through the Affordable Care Act and is a proven leader who can build coalitions among diverse individuals to ensure better health for our communities. Additionally, Dr. Murthy had extensive experience with protecting the public's health, including serving on the U.S. Presidential Advisory Council on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health; co-founding VISIONS Worldwide in 1995, a non-profit organization focused on HIV/AIDS education in India and the United States; and co-founding TrialNetworks, an organization aimed at optimizing the quality and efficiency of clinical operations at each stage of a trial from feasibility through closeout.

Therefore, ACP strongly encourages the HELP Committee to swiftly report to the full Senate the appointment of Dr. Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline W. Fincher MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, MACP
President



P.O. Box 23112
Washington, DC 20026
www.acttochange.org

February 26, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of Act To Change, we strongly support the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a champion for the physical, mental, social and emotional health of our nation's children. He is a tireless anti-bullying advocate and a proven leader who builds coalitions among diverse communities to ensure better health for our country. We believe he will again serve the nation well in this role, especially at this critical time of crisis.

Act To Change is a national non-profit organization dedicated to combating bullying and hate, especially among Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) youth. Act To Change envisions a world where all youth-- including from the AAPI, Sikh, Muslim, LGBTQI, and immigrant communities-- have the opportunity to grow up feeling supported and proud of who they are. Act To Change supports youth agency in responding to bullying with healthy ways, connects students with culturally-responsive resources, and advocates for systemic change.

Since our organization's inception, Dr. Murthy has been an avid supporter of our mission to end bullying in the AAPI community. Act To Change originally launched in 2015 as a public

awareness campaign under President Barack Obama's White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) in which Dr. Murthy served as co-chair. As Act To Change transitioned out of the White House to a grassroots movement, Dr. Murthy provided invaluable support as we became a 501(c)(3) organization in 2018. We were honored to have Dr. Murthy serve as the first member of Act To Change's inaugural Advisory Council.

Bullying is a significant public health challenge facing our country. Many students are being bullied in schools due to increasingly anti-immigrant and xenophobic discourse. Unfortunately, many AAPI youth who are bullied also face cultural, religious, and language barriers to getting help. As a well-respected physician and public health expert, Dr. Murthy is keenly aware of the consequences of bullying on the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of children and young adults. As bullying and hate crimes against AAPIs rise across the country, Dr. Murthy's extensive training, background and passion for emotional health is a critical asset, now more than ever.

Dr. Murthy has been an invaluable partner in our movement to ensure that all youth feel supported in the development of their identity, and empowered to share their stories. Dr. Murthy advocates for the victims of bullying, while also seeking to understand and address the perpetrators who are often struggling themselves. We are continually humbled by Dr. Murthy's dedication to building more inclusive spaces for youth, especially those from communities of color.

We also support the government's commitment to diverse leadership. It is important to build a government that truly reflects the rich diversity of our country, including Asian American representation in top leadership roles. In addition, Dr. Murthy has the background and experience of working with diverse communities, and this perspective is critical in serving as Surgeon General when the government must respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact across the nation.

We strongly urge the swift appointment of Dr. Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Act To Change Board of Directors

Maulik Pancholy, Chair & Co-Founder
Rebecca Lee, Managing Director & Co-Founder
Jill Yu, Managing Director & Co-Founder
Belinda Lei, Managing Director

Ru Bhatt
Josef Canaria
Elaine Dang
Mindy Kordash-Shim
Richard Leong
Jamie Lok
Saad Qureshi
Anthony Reyes
Nancy Tien



**ADDICTION
CRISIS
SOLUTIONS**

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

As President and Co-Founder of Addiction Crisis Solutions, and as an addiction medicine and psychiatric physician specialist, I am writing to support President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to again assume the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

While Dr. Murthy has been focusing his attention most recently on the COVID-19 pandemic, in his tenure as the 19th Surgeon General of the United States he focused on areas with which we will continue to grapple in the next years, such as our worsening overdose epidemic and the mental health challenges our population faces due to the impact of the pandemic. Dr Murthy's leadership in our public health crisis related to substance use, misuse, and addiction, led to the first *Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*. This effort helped drive the conversation about drug use in America and focused on the science of addiction and needs for changes in our care system.

Our public health emergency requires the leadership of Dr. Murthy, who knows both his field and this role and can therefore hit the ground running. Our immediate needs include addressing COVID-19, our increasing overdose rates, worsening mental health issues related to the pandemic, and other



critical public health issues – and all of these are areas in which Dr. Murthy focused his public health efforts. Dr. Murthy has excelled in the past as Surgeon General in the focus most urgently needed - putting scientific knowledge directly into public policy efforts.

As the Senate HELP committee addresses his nomination, we strongly urge you rapidly report to the full Senate and hope that Dr. Murthy will quickly resume his work on behalf of the public health of the United States.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly J. Clark MD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kelly J. Clark, MD, MBA, DFAPA, DFASAM
President, Addiction Crisis Solutions



Washington, D.C. Office
800 10th Street, N.W.
Two CityCenter, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20001-4956
(202) 638-1100

March 4, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, our clinician partners, including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses and other caregivers – and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is pleased to support the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. as the Surgeon General of the United States for the second time.

Dr. Murthy is a well-respected internal medicine specialist with decades of public health experience. As the U.S. Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, Dr. Murthy demonstrated strong public health expertise, including helping to lead the response to Ebola, Zika and the opioid crisis. He is a trusted voice and will be a valuable communicator with the American people.

Prior to being Surgeon General in 2014, Dr. Murthy was a faculty member at Harvard Medical School and a hospitalist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. He has been a strong leader for making health care insurance coverage available to all Americans. He has a strong track record of being able to build coalitions with diverse voices to ensure healthier communities.

The AHA looks forward to working with Dr. Murthy again if he is confirmed as U.S. Surgeon General and supporting his critical work to improve health care across America. He is the right person to help lead our national efforts to battle COVID-19 and allow for a return to a "new normal" across the country.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Pollack
President and CEO





JAMES L. MADARA, MD
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

ama-assn.org
t (312) 464-5000

February 15, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), it gives me great pleasure to support the nomination of Vivek Murthy, MD, to be the Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service.

As the 19th Surgeon General during the Obama-Biden Administration, Dr. Murthy played a vital leadership role in the efforts to protect the nation from the Zika and Ebola viruses. With new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations at their highest levels to date, Dr. Murthy's experience with these previous viral threats will be extremely helpful.

The AMA also worked closely with Dr. Murthy during his previous tenure as Surgeon General on the epidemic of drug-related overdose deaths, a nationwide public health emergency that was already accelerating even before COVID-19. Dr. Murthy issued a landmark report in 2016 on this epidemic, "Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health." This report used scientific data to clearly explain that addiction is a chronic disease, not a moral failing. It also demonstrated both the devastating toll of stigma on the lives of patients with this disease and the potential for patients to lead satisfying, productive lives if access to evidence-based treatment is expanded.

Dr. Murthy did groundbreaking work to address the destructive health impact of e-cigarette use, issuing the first-ever report by a U.S. Surgeon General on e-cigarette use among youth and young adults. Dr. Murthy's report came at a time when e-cigarette use had exploded, growing 900 percent from 2011 to 2015, to make them the most commonly used form of tobacco among youth in the US, surpassing all conventional tobacco products. Dr. Murthy's report pointed to the need to take action to protect our nation's young people from being harmed by these products. Also, although the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the adverse effects of stress and burnout on physicians and other health professionals, Dr. Murthy began working to address this issue long ago.

Vivek Murthy, MD, is a visionary health care leader with vast experience tackling some of the toughest medical and public health challenges our nation has faced. The AMA strongly urges that the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions quickly recommend Dr. Murthy's confirmation as Surgeon General of the US Public Health Service.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD



March 1, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray Chair The Honorable Richard Burr Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the American Walks, I would like to express our strongest possible support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a well-respected internal medicine physician specialist with decades of public health experience, who will again serve the country well in this role. It is vitally important to report Dr. Murthy's nomination to the full Senate as quickly possible so that he can fully engage in responding to the ongoing public health emergency (PHE) caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

America Walks is a national network of individuals and organizations that are working to advance safe, accessible, equitable places to walk and move. We work with over 60,000 individuals and almost 500 organizations that are working to improve the walking condition in their neighborhoods and make pedestrian safety a community priority for everyone. We worked with Dr. Murthy in the release of the Surgeon General's 2015 *Call to Action for Promoting Walking and Walkable Communities*. That Call has been answered by 1000s of communities as they have worked to prevent chronic disease by making safe walking an option. We all know how important physical activity is to lifelong health, walking is the primary way that people get their activity. Thanks to past work by Dr. Murthy that opportunity is available to more people in more places.

Dr. Murthy understands the importance of preventing diseases even as we focus on controlling the pandemic. Making sure that communities have access to safe, public spaces and outdoor parks and trails has been an essential element of staying safe and surviving during COVID. Dr. Murthy will bring this awareness to his work to continue to improve the public's health. He has helped coordinate the Biden administration response to COVID and getting the vaccine supply distributed, that knowledge coupled with his understanding of necessary community prevention infrastructure makes him the perfect person to be Surgeon General and lead us to a healthy, active Covid-controlled future. We urge you to confirm him as quickly as possible, the health of the nation depends on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Katherine Kraft".

M. Katherine Kraft, Ph.D.
Senior Advisor and immediate past Executive Director

PO Box 70742
Bethesda, MD 20813
503 610 6619
www.americawalks.org



2118 Plum Grove Road #201
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

www.AMHP.us

contact@amhp.us

American Muslim Health Professionals

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP) would like to express its support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. AMHP believes Dr. Murthy's experience and qualifications make him an exemplary public health leader, especially during this critical time in our nation's history when all of us are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Murthy is an expert physician and public health champion and his rich political career and background will contribute to his efficacy as a leader. Dr. Murthy has brought a greater sense of prevention to this nation's health and policy agenda and has proven his dedication and commitment to improving the lives of all Americans with particular attention to the underserved; an important aspect of AMHP's mission. We have full conviction that Dr. Murthy has the knowledge, resources, and requisite expertise to fully engage the American public in responding to COVID-19 and other public health crises. Dr. Murthy was an exceptional Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017 and led several initiatives that targeted critical public health issues including the opioid crisis, mental health awareness and the health impacts of climate change.

As a national public health nonprofit organization committed to professional development, mental health, and advocacy for underserved communities, AMHP looks forward to working with the newly appointed Surgeon General in support of the nation's health.

Sincerely,

Hasan Shanawani MD, MPH
President
American Muslim Health Professionals



MuslimHealth



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the American Medical Student Association (AMSA), we would like to express our **strongest support** for President Biden's nominations of **Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.** to the position of Surgeon General of the United States, **Xavier Becerra, J.D.** to the position of Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), and **Rachel Levine, M.D.** to the position of Assistant Secretary of HHS. AMSA is the oldest and largest independent association of physicians-in-training in the United States committed to representing the concerns of future physicians, advancing the interests of our patients, and improving the nation's health with over 70 years of activism.

Dr. Murthy is a trusted national voice on health issues and he is the crisis-tested leader we need for the role of America's Doctor. Dr. Murthy has dedicated his career to tackling some of the most pressing health issues facing Americans, including fighting the opioid crisis, stemming the spread of deadly viruses, and shining a light on the importance of mental health and well-being.

As one of the nation's experts on the COVID-19 pandemic, he served as the then-President-elect's top COVID-19 advisor, and previously helped lead the nation's response to Ebola and Zika viruses. He is a public health expert who is uniquely qualified to help the American people navigate the critical health challenges ahead of us, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We supported Dr. Murthy during his previous nomination and we believe that he would be perfect for the job in this critical moment.

California Attorney General Becerra is the right choice to lead HHS both during this time of one crisis compounded by another, and beyond, in this changing landscape of U.S. healthcare. He has spent his career fighting to protect underserved communities and expand access to quality, affordable healthcare. He has held drug companies accountable for their role in the opioid crisis, led a multi-state coalition to protect the health and welfare of immigrant children being held in detention, and established a new agency dedicated to protecting communities disproportionately impacted by public health hazards. As the leader of the second-largest Justice Department in the nation, Attorney General Becerra has experience managing a large and complex agency, and would be well-equipped to run HHS.

Dr. Rachel Levine is an accomplished pediatrician who is uniquely qualified to oversee the nation's public health policy. With a history of supporting adolescent, behavioral, and mental health, she has a strong record of service as Pennsylvania's top doctor and as the state's health secretary. Her efforts in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, fighting the opioid epidemic, preventing chronic diseases, and addressing health disparities in her state will carry forward in her role to protect the nation's health. Dr. Levine has the expertise that will be crucial in her leadership across the offices and programs at HHS.

This year has been filled with challenges that no one could have anticipated: a pandemic that is still not under control, frontline workers and trainees left to fight without crucial tools, assaults on science and public health, a national reckoning for racial injustice, a growing climate crisis, and threats to the very fabric of our democracy. But in the midst of this myriad of trials, we stand poised for change at this time.

With the support of AMSA's Board of Trustees, we believe Dr. Murthy, Attorney General Becerra, and Dr. Levine will help steer the nation through a time of crisis and help secure a healthier future for Americans. Therefore, AMSA strongly encourages the HELP Committee to report their appointments to the full Senate. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ali H. Bokhari', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ali H. Bokhari, D.O., M.P.H.
President, American Medical Student Association

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions



February 25, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of the American Medical Women's Association, we write to express our strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Murthy is a highly qualified and passionate leader who should be recognized for his many years of public health experience. Given his previous service as Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, we believe he is well-positioned to meet the extraordinary medical challenges facing our nation at this difficult and challenging time.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on essential health issues such as obesity, mental health, childhood immunization, and addiction, all of which are of even more importance in pandemic times. We particularly applaud Dr. Murthy's work in addressing the opioid epidemic and his call-to-action on this important issue. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy also helped direct the country's response to both Ebola and Zika, experience that will prove invaluable in steering us through the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he has worked with state and local officials, schools, businesses, health care providers, and others to understand and navigate the complexities and challenges of the pandemic across sectors. In addition, he has been an instrumental member of President Biden's COVID-19 transition team, helping to craft the President's National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness as co-chair of the COVID-19 Transition Advisory Board and leader of the U.S. Health and Human Services Agency Review Team.

American Medical Women's Association
Two Woodfield Lake • 1100 E Woodfield Road, Suite 350 • Schaumburg, IL 60173 • Telephone (847) 517-2801 •
Fax: (847) 517-7229 • www.amwa-doc.org



Dr. Murthy's recent work has focused extensively on the public health crisis of loneliness, deemed an epidemic in recent government reports and now magnified across all segments and ages of our population due to COVID-19. His expertise in this area is both timely and deep, which is exactly what is needed as we seek to emerge from this pandemic.

The American Medical Women's Association—founded in 1915—focuses on advancing quality, accessible healthcare for all and advocating for equity in medicine. As a multi-specialty association of women physicians, we believe that Dr. Murthy has the necessary qualifications and demonstrated expertise to serve as Surgeon General at this time. We have and will continue to support the Office of the Surgeon General in its work to improve the health of our nation.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer our strong support for Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Sandhu".

Nicole Sandhu, MD, PHD
President
American Medical Women's Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eliza Lo Chin, MD".

Eliza Lo Chin, MD, MPH
Executive Director
American Medical Women's Association



AMERICAN
PSYCHIATRIC
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800 Maine Avenue, S.W.
Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20024

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February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

The American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty society representing more than 38,800 physician psychiatrists who treat mental health and substance use disorders, supports the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A., as the next Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Murthy is a highly skilled and respected leader, with decades of public health experience and great sensitivity to the mental health and substance use disorder-related needs of our nation. As Surgeon General during President Obama's Administration from 2014 to 2017, Dr. Murthy worked closely with the APA to fight the opioid epidemic through education, screening, and evidence-based treatment. He also provided important leadership to reshape how Americans see addiction by talking about and treating it as a chronic illness, not a moral failing.

As the co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition and through his own writings, Dr. Murthy has brought much needed attention to the growing public health concern of loneliness and isolation, including the need for coping tools to combat these dangers. Dr. Murthy's expertise and understanding that mental health and physical health are intertwined will be an asset as our nation confronts the enormous mental health and substance use crises that are being compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and require interventions applicable to the near- and long-term.

Our nation will be well-served by Dr. Murthy's leadership as Surgeon General of the United States, as well as his voice for individuals suffering from mental health and substance use disorders, as we work to address the critical health crises facing our country.

We urge the HELP Committee and the full Senate to vote to confirm Dr. Murthy at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

Saul M. Levin, M.D., M.P.A., FRCP-E, FRCPsych
CEO and Medical Director



March 4, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

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**National Advocates for Asian
American, Native Hawaiian &
Pacific Islander Health**

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

Re: **Letter in Support of the Nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy for Surgeon
General of the United States**

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

The Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) strongly supports the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy for Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy brings his exceptional experience as a physician, educator, entrepreneur, prevention expert and, most significantly, as a former Surgeon General of the United States. With nearly thirty years of experience and expertise, Dr. Murthy is highly capable to fill one of the nation's highest health offices again and lead us out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

APIAHF is the nation's oldest and leading health policy organization working to advance the health and well-being of over 20 million Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs) across the U.S. and territories. APIAHF works to improve access to and the quality of care for communities who are predominantly immigrant, many of whom are limited English proficient, and may be new to the U.S. healthcare system or unfamiliar with private or public coverage. We have longstanding relationships with over 150 community-based organizations across 35 states and the Pacific, to whom we provide capacity building, advocacy and technical assistance.

As our country faces an unprecedented public health crisis, AANHPIs have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, facing higher rates of infection, death and economic consequences. In at least 10 states, AAs have a case fatality rate that is disproportionately higher than the general population, while the same is true for NHPs in 8 states. Across the country, Pacific Islanders are being hospitalized with COVID-19 at up to 10 times the rate of other racial groups. In addition, AANHPIs have increased risk of adverse COVID-19 outcomes (e.g., burden of chronic conditions and multigenerational homes), and a large proportion are frontline essential workers. At this critical moment, the country needs its leaders to make a serious commitment to reducing disparities in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and the overall lack of equitable access to quality healthcare, and Dr. Murthy understands and would meet this challenge.

Dr. Murthy also continues his commitment to promoting mental health, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a mental toll on Americans. AAs are doubly impacted as research shows that the stigma and uptick in violence targeting AAs since the start of the pandemic can have serious negative and long-term effects on

mental health. Additionally, the persistent lack of access to culturally and linguistically appropriate care contributes to AANHPIs to have some of the lowest rates of utilizing mental health services. As an advocate of mental health, Dr. Murthy would use the respect and trust of the Surgeon General's office to bring these issues to light.

Dr. Murthy has both the requisite substantive knowledge to serve as Surgeon General, as well as a deep commitment to advancing public health. He has proven his exceptional capabilities when he oversaw the nation's response to Ebola and Zika epidemics as Surgeon General during the Obama Administration. Drawing from this experience, Dr. Murthy led President Biden's COVID-19 Advisory Board and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the production and distribution of vaccines.

His commitment to the health of Americans has made him into a trusted public health leader and collaborator, willing to build bridges with other health leaders and communities alike. It is no surprise that Dr. Murthy is supported by the nation's preeminent health and physician groups including the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, and the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association. He is also backed by leading representatives of AANHPI communities, including the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

As Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy would be the nation's doctor, serving as the face of health and prevention. He comes with a distinguished record of excellence and would serve in one of the highest positions in the federal government where AANHPIs are underrepresented, despite being the fastest growing groups in the nation. As the son of immigrants from India, Dr. Murthy would stand as the only Indian American to serve as Surgeon General and continue the line of increasing representation of diverse communities.

For these reasons, APIAHF strongly urges the HELP Committee to swiftly report to the full Senate the appointment of Dr. Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juliet K. Choi', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Juliet K. Choi
President & CEO



ASAM American Society of
Addiction Medicine

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February 25, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), a national medical specialty society representing more than 6,600 physicians and other healthcare professionals who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, I would like to express our strong support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. for the position of Surgeon General of the United States. We urge the Senate to confirm his appointment expeditiously so that he may begin contributing his knowledge and leadership to the Administration's response to our nation's addiction and overdose crisis, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the 19th Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Murthy spearheaded a plethora of public health initiatives designed to address the opioid overdose epidemic. Turn The Tide Rx included direct outreach to clinicians across the country with educational resources designed to empower them and their practices. In addition, under Dr. Murthy's leadership, the Office of the Surgeon General released the first ever *Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*, which generated important insights into this devastating health crisis. Finally, Dr. Murthy's public appearances and speeches on the issue have been crucial in transforming the narrative surrounding addiction so that it is rooted in compassion and empathy.

We understand that Dr. Murthy is passionate about expanding access to evidence-based, high-quality care for people with addiction, including access to medications for opioid use disorder. He is committed to improving education about addictive disease among all healthcare professionals, including physicians, pharmacists, nurses and counselors, so that we can build a medical workforce with the capacity and expertise to close our nation's addiction treatment gap. He is particularly well-suited to help inform the Administration's

efforts to expand affordable access to all effective prevention interventions and treatments for substance use disorder, a goal ASAM shares with the President.

Thank you in advance for your timely consideration of Dr. Murthy's nomination. We hope that he will be quickly confirmed in the role of Surgeon General. ASAM looks forward to working with him, the entire Administration, and Congress to advance sound policy that will help our nation treat addiction and save more lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul H. Earley M.D." in a cursive style.

Paul Earley, MD, DFASAM
President, American Society of Addiction Medicine

**HEALTH, MEDICINE
& SOCIETY PROGRAM**

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

It is with great pleasure and wholehearted support that I recommend Dr. Vivek Murthy for confirmation as the 21st Surgeon General of the United States. I have known Dr. Murthy since his days as a student at the Yale School of Medicine (when I served as associate dean of the medical school), have followed his career closely, and know of no one better qualified to take on this important position. Indeed, I urge you to report Dr. Murthy's nomination to the full Senate as quickly as possible so that he can fully engage in addressing the nation's COVID-19 pandemic and otherwise advance the public's health.

As I hope you would agree, Dr. Murthy's credentials for this post are outstanding – and unmatched. A highly regarded and well-respected physician specializing in internal medicine, with a graduate degree in business administration and extensive medical and public health experience, Dr. Murthy previously served as US Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017. During his tenure, he directed several public health initiatives, including the national response to the opioid crisis, the rising use of e-cigarettes, the health impact of climate change, and the many challenges of mental health, most especially the detrimental effects of loneliness (the subject of his well-received 2020 book, *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*). In this capacity, he also led the US Public Health Service and its Commissioned Corps, helping to manage the US response to the Ebola and Zika outbreaks as well as the Flint, Michigan drinking water crisis.

Since leaving office in 2017, Dr. Murthy has remained very much involved in promoting the public's health. Most recently, he served as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board to help the incoming Biden administration coordinate its response to the pandemic. As well, and in far less visible settings, he has helped to tackle major public health issues of the day. For example, Dr. Murthy has appeared before the Aspen Institute's Health Strategy Group to inform and guide the development of recommendations to address another US epidemic – the country's ongoing opioid crisis.

But beyond all this, Dr. Murthy is simply a good and caring human being. He is passionate about his work, but he is also passionate about the people who can benefit from his work. And that includes all Americans – regardless of what they look like, where they live, whom they love, or whatever their political affiliation. That is exactly what being “America’s doctor” is all about.

For all these reasons and so much more, I ask that that you and the HELP Committee move expeditiously to favorably report Dr. Murthy’s appointment as our next Surgeon General to the full Senate for its consideration. The country cannot do any better and should not wait any longer.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views about Dr. Murthy and his nomination. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

All best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth J. Katz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RUTH J. KATZ

Vice President, Aspen Institute
Executive Director, Health, Medicine and Society Program
The Aspen Institute
ruth.katz@aspeninstitute.org
202-736-5827



DR. NADINE BURKE HARRIS
SURGEON GENERAL

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

As Surgeon General of the state of California, I write to express my strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. I have collaborated with and been advised by Dr. Murthy over many years, including on matters regarding public health strategy and messaging on a range of issues from mental health to pandemic response.

Having served in the role of Surgeon General for CA throughout the COVID pandemic, I cannot understate the importance of having trusted, responsive and transparent public health leadership. Our ability to shape behavior — whether that behavior is masking, physical distancing, minimizing mixing, or accepting a vaccine — is the most potent tool in our arsenal against this pandemic. Dr. Murthy has a strong reputation as a trusted, rigorous and thoughtful public health leader. His previous service as U.S. Surgeon General and Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, from 2014 to 2017 brings invaluable experience and an understanding of the tools the Office of the Surgeon General should immediately deploy to help bring a swift end to the COVID pandemic.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika, and also led important public health initiatives focusing on topics such as

obesity, mental health, childhood immunization, and addiction. In addition, Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition will enable him to get started on day one to support the federal government's pandemic response.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer my strong support for Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination and I look forward to working closely with him on COVID response and other matters of public health should he be confirmed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nadine Burke Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nadine Burke Harris, MD, MPH, FAAP
California Surgeon General



March 10, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer and Senator McConnell,

We write to you from the Cities Thrive Coalition, a national coalition of local government leaders, mental health leaders, and nonprofits from over 200 cities, in support of two Biden Administration nominees who are long standing allies in the effort to advance mental health and substance misuse policy: Attorney General Xavier Becerra and Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. We are confident they possess the experience and qualities essential to take on the challenge of improving mental health support across this country. We had a mental health crisis well before the COVID-19 pandemic, with an estimated 1 in 5 Americans experiencing a mental health condition. The pandemic has exacerbated the existing illness of many and caused many more to suffer. Mental health affects all of our families and will require the unique expertise and on-the-ground experience of these two nominees.

Born out of New York City's ThriveNYC effort in 2015, the Cities Thrive Coalition seeks to identify critical gaps in mental healthcare. Together, as a bi-partisan group, we advocate for comprehensive reform and promote effective policy solutions. With dedicated, experienced federal leadership, we can achieve much more -- which is why we urge the confirmation of Attorney General Becerra and Surgeon General Murthy.

Attorney General Becerra's career is one of lifelong dedication to the public good. He began in 1984 working in a legal services office, with a focus on mental illness. His devotion to the community traces back to growing up in a working-class family in Sacramento, California. These humble roots led him to dedicate 24 years of service in the US House of Representatives. While there, he led the House Democratic Caucus and was Ranking Member of the Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee. From the beginning and across all sectors of government, Attorney General Becerra has been at the forefront of policy seeking to improve the healthcare of America's families.

Surgeon General Vivek Murthy comes from a family of immigrants who have dedicated themselves to medicine. He served as the 19th Surgeon General of the United States from

December 15, 2014 to April 21, 2017. In that role, he took on major issues including the opioid crisis, addiction as a chronic illness, and E-cigarette use among youth. A stalwart partner on mental health, Dr. Murthy focused his attention on chronic stress and isolation as root causes affecting health, productivity, and happiness. He collaborated with the Veterans Health Administration to identify ways to cultivate emotional well-being and fitness. We need his creativity to discover innovative solutions for the complex needs of mental wellness.

Our Coalition members have seen firsthand that mental health challenges aren't confined to red or blue states. Right now, Americans are struggling in every community, every City, and every part of our nation. That is why we urge you to give these nominees full consideration, as their confirmation would immediately inspire our country and give us leaders who are qualified and devoted to serving the physical and mental well-being of America's families. We look forward to continuing to partner with you to develop policies pivotal to serving the mental health needs of our nation.

Sincerely,

Cities Thrive Coalition

Cities Thrive Coalition Members Signatories

Mayors and County Managers

- City of Albuquerque, New Mexico
- City of Alexandria, Virginia
- City of Artesia, California
- City of Austin, Texas
- City of Bridgeport, Connecticut
- City of Central Falls, Rhode Island
- City of Gary, Indiana
- City of Hoboken, New Jersey
- City of Huntington, West Virginia
- City of Kinston, North Carolina
- City of Madison, Wisconsin
- City of Middletown, Connecticut
- City of Mount Vernon, New York
- City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- City of Richmond, California
- City of San Antonio, Texas
- City of San Diego, California
- City of San Jose, California
- City of San Leandro, California

- City of St. Louis, Missouri
- City of Sunrise, Florida
- City of Torrance, California
- City of West Hollywood, California
- City of White Plains, New York
- King County, Washington
- Town of Carrboro, North Carolina
- Village of Skokie, Illinois

Community-based Organization

- Corner House Behavioral Health-Municipality of Princeton
- Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network
- Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund
- New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
- Princeton Municipality
- SEL Consulting Collaborative
- The Kennedy Forum
- The Reilly Group, Inc.
- UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine
- Well Being Trust
- Wrenn Insights

cc/
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Richard Burr
The Honorable Mike Crapo

Support

1. David Einhorn
2. US Conference of Mayors
3. The Islamic Society of North America
4. Education Development Center
5. Act to Change
6. March of Dimes
7. Encore.org
8. Scan Group and SCAN Health Plan
9. American Medical Women's Association (AMWA)
10. National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA)
11. America Walks
12. American Hospital Association (AHA)
13. Asian & Pacific Islander Health Forum (APIAHF)
14. Primary Care Collaborative (PCC)
15. South Asian Americans in Public Service (SAAPS)
16. Gold Foundation
17. Jewish Democratic Council of America
18. Cities Thrive – cosigned by 27 mayors and county managers and 11 community-based organizations
19. Shatter Proof
20. Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, California Surgeon General
21. Institute for Healthcare Improvement
22. National Domestic Workers Alliance
23. Feeding America
24. National Council on Asian Pacific Americans



South Asian Americans in Public Service

March 6, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of South Asian Americans in Public Service, we write to express our strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Murthy is a highly qualified and passionate leader and internal medicine physician with many years of public health experience. Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and we believe he is well-positioned to serve the country again in this role.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on topics such as obesity, mental health, childhood immunization, and addiction. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy also helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika, experience that will prove invaluable in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition will enable him to get started on day one to support the federal government's pandemic response.

South Asian Americans in Public Service is a network of South Asian American professionals and students across the nation dedicated to meaningfully contributing to their communities and promoting cultural and intellectual diversity through public service. On multiple occasions, Dr. Murthy spoke with members of our community, spreading hope and positivity and inspiring future generations of public servants to improve our nation. Nominating Dr. Murthy to Surgeon General of the United States would reassure millions across the nation that experienced, diligent, and diverse experts lead the current pandemic response.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer our strong support for Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aman Panjwani
Co-Founder

Meena Venkataramanan
Co-Founder

Trisha Prabhu



February 26, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chairwoman
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 U.S. Senate
 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 U.S. Senate
 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of Education Development Center (EDC), I write to express our strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

My name is Dave Offensend and I serve as the President and CEO of EDC, a global non-profit that advances lasting solutions to improve education, promote health, and expand economic opportunity. Since 1958, we have been a leader in designing, implementing, and evaluating powerful and innovative programs in more than 80 countries around the world.

We have found Dr. Murthy to be a highly qualified and passionate leader and internal medicine physician with many years of public health experience. Not only does he possess a deep public health background, but his expertise also covers both physical and behavioral health as well, ensuring a vital synthesis of all that can be done to ensure health in the nation. Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and we believe he is well-positioned to serve the country again in this role.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on topics such as obesity, suicide prevention, mental health, childhood immunization, and addiction. As Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy served as an ex-officio Executive Committee member of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, the nation's public-private partnership for suicide prevention led by EDC, and helped to advance implementation of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy also helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika, both here and abroad, experience that will prove invaluable in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition will enable him to get started on day one to support the federal government's pandemic response. We are particularly pleased that Dr. Murthy will also ensure that the mental health consequences of COVID-19 and its aftermath are fully addressed as well.



We believe that Dr. Murthy would serve well in this capacity and his past and current experience makes him a most suitable candidate for this position. Dr. Murthy has demonstrated his command of the issues relevant today such as COVID-19, serious mental illness, loneliness, suicide, opioid overdose, the value of prevention and the importance of addressing structural racism. He is well-prepared to serve as Surgeon General of the United States at this important period in our nation's history.

One of our major areas of thought leadership at EDC is the prevention of suicide and substance misuse and we have the opportunity to do this through operating the National Suicide Prevention Resource Center, the Zero Suicide Institute, our substance misuse prevention solutions efforts and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention to name just a few of our initiatives. In this capacity we have worked often with Dr. Murthy and were pleased with his leadership and engagement.

At EDC, we know that complex public health problems, like suicide and substance misuse, and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic require commitment from national, state, and local agencies, requires a leader who is well versed and can hit the ground running on day one. Dr. Murthy is that candidate for this important position at this important time in our nation's history.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer our strong support for Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David G. Offensend".

David G. Offensend
President and CEO
Education Development Center



February 26, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of Encore.org, I would like to express our strong support for President Biden's nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Encore.org is a national nonprofit working to bring older and younger changemakers together to solve problems, bridge divides, and create a better future for all. While many others will testify to Dr. Murthy's character and experience, we are deeply impressed by his profound understanding of the loneliness epidemic and its devastating impact on both younger and older generations.

More than that, we are impressed by Dr. Murthy's view on the role disconnection plays in all our nation's ills and on the power of human connection to bring us back to health. As he explained so clearly in an [interview](#) last June,

...[A]s somebody who has worked in government and seen just the profound costs of political polarization, I came to see also that this disconnection between us, this fraying of connections between people and communities all across America, is making it harder for us to talk to each other, to have the kind of dialogue that we need in order to address the big threats we face, whether that's climate change, or the opioid epidemic, or chronic disease.

And so...I came to, to realize that not only is loneliness a problem that is deeply connected to so many of the others, but that social connection is actually a resource that we have largely under-appreciated, and that we have not really cultivated as intentionally as I think we could.

If you think of social connection as a tool that can help us improve our health and our productivity and our children's education, and even help to mend our dialogue and fix the polarization that we're experiencing in politics, then it seems like an invaluable asset that we should be cultivating. But I think that we see it as a "nice to have," in society, as opposed to a "necessary to have." I think we see it as something that is pleasant, but not a strategic value, but I think it's central to what we need to do to build a stronger and a healthier country.

Beyond the power of his insights, Dr. Murthy believes deeply in the values of listening, empathy, and service to one another. And he sees the vitality that interdependence brings.

"Acknowledging our interdependence is not a sign of weakness. It's how we have evolved over thousands of years," he said in an [interview](#) with AARP Magazine. "And it's a recognition of the fact that we truly are better together, that we can do more, we can be more, we can experience more when we do it together."

Encore.org strongly encourages the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions to swiftly report to the full Senate the appointment of Dr. Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

When Dr. Murthy returns to the job of the nation's top doctor, we can and will be a healthier nation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Freedman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marc" being more prominent than the last name "Freedman".

Marc Freedman
Founder and CEO

March 6, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger-relief organization, I write to express our organization's strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Murthy is a highly qualified internal medicine physician with many years of public health experience. Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017 and we believe he is well-positioned to once again serve our nation in this critical role.

We are honored that Dr. Murthy previously served on the Board of Directors of our organization. During his tenure, Dr. Murthy supported Feeding America in strengthening our commitment to building healthier communities through equitable food access. Our network of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs work every day to provide meals to our neighbors facing hunger – meals we know are integral to long-term physical and mental health. With Dr. Murthy's invaluable expertise, Feeding America has been better equipped to ensure the food we provide for people facing hunger forms the foundation of a nutritious diet.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy created initiatives to address some of our nation's most pressing public health challenges such as obesity, mental health, childhood immunization and addiction. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika – experience that will prove critical in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris transition period will enable him to start strong from day one in support of the federal government's pandemic response.

Dr. Vivek Murthy has made immeasurable contributions to the future of America's public health programs. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our strong support for Dr. Murthy's nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Babineaux-Fontenot', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Claire Babineaux-Fontenot
Chief Executive Officer

ASSOCIATION OF STATE AND TERRITORIAL HEALTH OFFICIALS



National Headquarters
2231 Crystal Drive, Suite 450
Arlington, VA 22202
(202) 371-9090

Regional Office
600 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 1000
Atlanta, GA 30308
(202) 371-9090

www.astho.org
@ASTHO

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), I am pleased to submit a letter of support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA to serve as the U.S. surgeon general at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Murthy possesses a wealth of leadership and public health experience both as the former U.S. surgeon general and through his work with the HIV/AIDS community. During the Obama administration, Dr. Murthy focused his tenure on addressing substance abuse and misuse, reducing e-cigarette use among youth, increasing vaccination rates, and promoting physical activity. These endeavors proved to be important strides to improving health.

ASTHO encourages a swift vote by the Senate to confirm Dr. Murthy to this position and looks forward to a partnership with HHS, the assistant secretary of health, and him so we can work collaboratively in achieving our mission to advance health equity and optimal health for all. If you require additional information or have any questions please contact Carolyn Mullen, senior vice president of government affairs and public relations at cmullen@astho.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Fraser", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Michael R. Fraser, PhD, MS, CAE, FCPP
Chief Executive Officer
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials



March 4, 2021
Re: Position of U.S. Surgeon General

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of The Arnold P. Gold Foundation, we write to express our strongest, enthusiastic endorsement of Dr. Vivek Murthy.

Dr. Murthy is a highly qualified, compassionate leader and a very accomplished senior physician in Internal Medicine with many years of public health experience. Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and we believe he is ideally positioned to serve the country.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on topics including mental health and addiction. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy also helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika, experience that will be invaluable in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition will enable him to get started on day one as "America's doctor" to support the federal government's pandemic response.

Since 1988, The Arnold P. Gold Foundation has been the preeminent nonprofit organization championing the human connection in healthcare. We believe that optimal care must be compassionate, collaborative, and scientifically excellent. Our programs encouraging humanistic care, such as the White Coat Ceremony and Tell Me More®, are in more than 165 medical schools and 360 nursing schools, as well as many hospitals and health systems. More than 35,000 medical students and physicians belong to our Gold Humanism Honor Society, including Dr. Murthy.

The Gold Foundation is particularly supportive of Dr. Murthy because of his steadfast compassion and empathy, woven through all of his many roles and accomplishments.

The Gold Foundation has honored Dr. Murthy's national leadership and compassionate care with both the National Humanism in Medicine Medal in 2016 and the Vilcek-Gold Award for Humanism in Healthcare in 2020. Dr. Murthy is exactly the kind of empathic physician-leader that America needs in this challenging time.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer our passionate endorsement of Dr. Vivek Murthy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Richard I. Levin, MD
President and CEO
The Arnold P. Gold Foundation



Richard C. Sheerr
Chairman of the Board
The Arnold P. Gold Foundation



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of Indiaspora, I write to express our strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Murthy is a highly qualified and empathetic leader, and a physician with several years of public health experience. Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and we believe he is well-positioned to serve the country again in this role.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on topics such as mental health, loneliness, childhood immunization and addiction. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy also helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika, experience that will prove invaluable in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition will enable him to get started on day one to support the federal government's pandemic response.

Dr. Murthy also has proved to be a strong ally for communities of color in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. He has met with our nonprofit of Indian diaspora leaders to brief our community on COVID-19.

Indiaspora (www.indiaspora.org) is a nonprofit network of global Indian leaders from diverse backgrounds and professions who are committed to inspiring the diaspora to be a force for positive impact by providing a platform to collaborate, build community engagement, and catalyze social change.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer our strong support for Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Rangaswami". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "M".

MR Rangaswami
Founder and Chairman of the Board
Indiaspora



February 25, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), I write to express our strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Murthy's experience and expertise – as a physician, a leader, a passionate advocate for public health and improvement of our health systems, and of course as a former Surgeon General – make him the ideal individual for this essential role.

Dr. Murthy has led the US response to chronic health issues such as obesity, mental health, child immunizations, and addiction; and to acute threats to public health such as Zika and Ebola. These experiences position him perfectly to serve the country again as our Surgeon General.

The organization I lead, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), is the global leader in applying improvement science and methods to significantly improve the quality of health and health care. One of the enduring lessons of our work over the past 30 years has been that meaningful change requires engaged and effective leadership. This is exactly what Dr. Murthy will provide as Surgeon General.

Dr. Murthy also clearly understands how our health care systems and our public health agencies need to broaden and deepen their collaboration to best serve and steward the health of our citizens. This has never been more important than now in the age of COVID-19.

I have known Dr. Murthy personally for more than 15 years. We began our careers in medicine together, as residents at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. I know Dr. Murthy to be a deeply principled and ethical person, with strong values that guide his work and his life. I've also, in my career, had the pleasure and privilege of meeting and working with scores of inspirational and pioneering leaders in health care. I know of no one more deserving of this role, or prepared and qualified to serve the country as Surgeon General, than Vivek.

On behalf of IHI, I appreciate the opportunity to express our strongest possible support for Dr. Murthy's nomination to the office of US Surgeon General.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kedar Mate', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kedar Mate, MD
President and CEO



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions
U.S. Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray and Senator Burr,

It is our pleasure to send this letter in support of the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to serve as the U.S. Surgeon General. We will leave others to comment on his impressive body of work as the 19th Surgeon General, including the issuance of the seminal report, *Facing Addiction in America*. We will focus our letter on his recent service as a distinguished policy scholar in health policy and management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Starting in September 2019, Dr. Murthy spent one or two days a month with our students, staff, and faculty -- sharing his knowledge in settings large and small. He brought care and attention to each of his interactions. For students, he is inspirational. For faculty, he is thoughtful and helpful. For all, he is a patient listener, offering both support and ideas. His wonderful book on loneliness was unfortunately well timed for the isolation of the pandemic.

We have no doubt that Dr. Murthy will use the position of U.S. Surgeon General to bring people together, recognize the common bonds that help us to thrive, and inspire the nation to a healthier future. We support his nomination enthusiastically.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joshua M. Sharfstein".

Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D.
Vice Dean for Public Health Practice
and Community Engagement

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colleen L. Barry".

Colleen L. Barry, PhD.
Chair
Department of Health Policy and Management



The Islamic Society of North America

February 26, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) would like to express its support for President Biden's nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy, to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. We believe that Dr. Murthy's qualifications and experience make him uniquely qualified for this position.

Dr. Murthy is an accomplished public health champion and we believe that his rich background and experience will greatly contribute to his efficacy in this position. He has led and drawn our nations attention to critical public health issues such as the opioid epidemic and emotional health and wellbeing. As the Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, he directed a uniformed service of 6,600 officers dedicated to safeguarding the health of the nation. He has conducted research on vaccine development and clinical trial participation and founded several organizations focused on HIV/AIDS education and rural health. Dr. Murthy has the knowledge and expertise to fully engage the American Public and government institutions in responding to COVID-19.

As a 57-year-old national charitable organization, committed to the well being of our community and society, we hope and look forward to the appointment of Dr. Vivek Murthy as the Surgeon General of the United States.

Sincerely,

Safaa Zarzour

Safaa Zarzour
President
Islamic Society of North America



Jewish Democratic Council of America

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Boca Raton, FL
Michele Rosen
Seattle, WA
Michael Tarnoff
Chicago, IL
June Trone
Potomac, MD

Chief Executive Officer

Halle Soifer

March 15, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of the Jewish Democratic Council of America (JDCA), we would like to convey our strong support for President Joe Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

JDCA actively engages Jewish Democrats in the electoral and legislative processes and supports policies aligned with socially progressive, pro-Israel Jewish community values and our [platform](#). As JDCA continues to advocate for responsible leadership to protect American lives and livelihoods impacted by COVID-19, we believe Dr. Murthy's confirmation is key to supporting the Biden administration's efforts to end the pandemic.

Dr. Murthy is eminently qualified. Dr. Murthy previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and we believe he is well-positioned to serve his country again in this vital role during the crisis of the coronavirus pandemic. With over 25 years of experience, Dr. Murthy is the ideal candidate to lead our nation through this public health crisis.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on topics such as obesity, mental health, childhood immunization, and addiction. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy helped oversee the country's response to the Ebola and Zika viruses, experience which will be invaluable for fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.



Jewish Democratic Council of America

JDCA Board of Directors

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Boca Raton, FL
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Potomac, MD

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Chevy Chase, MD

Peter Gillon
Washington, DC

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Franklin, MI

Kevin Rader
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Michele Rosen
Seattle, WA

Michael Tarnoff
Chicago, IL

June Trone
Potomac, MD

Chief Executive Officer

Halie Soifer

As co-chair of the COVID-19 Transition Advisory Board, Dr. Murthy helped craft President Biden's National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness and advised the administration on vaccine supply and distribution and use of the Defense Production Act (DPA). The Biden administration has since used the DPA to bolster America's response to this crisis by accelerating production of vaccines, testing, masks, and personal protective equipment for healthcare workers.

The Jewish Democratic Council of America is proud to support Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination to be the Surgeon General of the United States. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ron Klein,
Board Chair, Jewish Democratic Council of America

Halie Soifer
Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Democratic Council of America



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Community on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the Council on Black Health, I would like to express our full and enthusiastic support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is renowned and well-respected for his training and specialization in internal medicine, as well as for his support of establishing a culture of prevention, rather than treatment, to improve health in the United States. Dr. Murthy established his capability to serve well in the role of Surgeon General during his previous term in the position from 2014 – 2017. Given the current public health emergency in the United States, it is essential to report Dr. Murthy's nomination to the full Senate as quickly as possible so he can begin the process of addressing the current pandemic and continuing to advance the health of our nation.

The Council on Black Health is a national network of academic researchers, community-based organizations, and community members who have a common mission of developing and promoting solutions that achieve healthy Black communities. Our main activities include: 1) biennial national convening that brings together diverse academic and community-based stakeholders to discuss Black community health issues and generate insights about potential solutions; 2) collaborations with Black and other organizations to educate policymakers, key decision makers, and the general public about overcoming health disparities in Black communities; 3) a webinar series that offers research insights related to nutrition, physical activity, obesity and diabetes, and strategies to translate this research to Black communities; 4) research articles and reports to advance thinking about Black health issues; 5) career support and leadership opportunities for researchers and stakeholders working to improve health in Black communities; and 6) leading actionable research to promote sustainable and positive impacts on health and related outcomes in the Black community.

In his previous tenure as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy demonstrated his commitment to creating a culture of health and to health behaviors that can improve health, including healthy eating, physical activity, and mental well-being. He "walked the talk" when he issued *Step it Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities* and participated in a national campaign to increase physical activity. I was in the audience when Dr. Murthy spoke at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the American College of Sports Medicine. His inspirational words and his personal commitment to health and wellness encouraged the nearly 50,000 members of the College to renewed commitment to assisting Dr. Murthy in his efforts to improve the public's health.

An important inclusion in the call to action, Dr. Murthy highlighted the importance of equity, and the right for all people to "...have access to spaces and places that make it safe and easy for us to walk or wheelchair roll—whether in urban, suburban, or rural settings..." His attention to equity means that, in his efforts to create a culture of prevention, Dr. Murthy will also work to ensure that **no American**



citizen is left out. In selecting a Surgeon General of the United States, a commitment ensuring the health of **all** people is a critically important characteristic.

Dr. Murthy previously served the nation well in his role as Surgeon General. From 2017, when his term ended, to present Dr. Murthy has continued to actively engage in efforts to address the health of the public. He has participated in a number of scholarly activities to highlight the issue of mental well-being, specifically loneliness, which is quickly becoming a public health crisis in the United States in the face of the ongoing pandemic. In 2020, Dr. Murthy began serving as part of the Biden-Harris Transition Team's advisory council, and then as a member of the coronavirus advisory board. Dr. Murthy has received several prestigious awards and decorations for his work in public health, including the Public Health Service Outstanding Service Medal, the Public Health Service Presidential Unit Citation, and the Public Health Service Global Response Service Award.

Dr. Murthy's expert training, his record of public health service, his commitment to equity, and his previous success as Surgeon General make him the ideal candidate for the position of Surgeon General. The Council on Black Health urges the HELP Committee to swiftly report to the full Senate the appointment of Dr. Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. When he is appointed, the Council on Black Health looks forward to working alongside him in support of Dr. Murthy's work to improve the health of all United States citizens. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melicia C. Whitt-Glover', written in a cursive style.

Melicia C. Whitt-Glover, Ph.D.
Executive Director

February 25, 2021

Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of five of the nation's leading mental health, addiction, and well-being advocacy groups, we write to express our strong support for the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. as the 21st Surgeon General of the United States.

Americans are entering into a full year of the COVID-19 pandemic that has compounded the mental health epidemic. More than [26 million individuals](#) are experiencing mental illness without treatment. While the year-end funding package and stimulus contained support for mental health and substance use-related programs, there has been a severe lack of funding and prioritization of mental health services across all levels of government. People in every community across the country are suffering.

We need strong leaders like Dr. Murthy in office immediately to meet the needs of this moment and help bring relief to millions of Americans. As Surgeon General in the Obama Administration, Dr. Murthy went on a listening tour of America to hear firsthand about people's health concerns, learning that loneliness is deeply associated with an increased risk of heart disease, dementia, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances and even premature death. He also focused heavily on combating the opioid epidemic and prioritized emotional well being as a key component underlying all public health issues.

Dr. Murthy, a strong mental health champion, is uniquely qualified to address both the physical and mental health needs Americans are facing today. As a key member of President Biden's COVID-19 task force, he is well-versed in the effects the pandemic has had on Americans' well-being and his leadership will be critical to reversing the effects of the mental health crisis.

We believe Dr. Murthy is committed to addressing the gaps in programs and policies that promote and advance mental health, reduce stigma, and expand access to critical mental health and addiction care. We look forward to working with Dr. Murthy to improve the urgent state of

mental health in America and bringing mental health to the forefront of all public health solutions.

Sincerely,

Paul Gionfriddo,
Mental Health America

Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy,
The Kennedy Forum

Angela Kimball,
National Alliance on Mental Illness

Ben Miller,
Well Being Trust

Bill Smith,
Inseparable



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

February 21, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) and the 2,600 Ys across the country that are strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, I write in support of the confirmation of Dr. Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA as the Surgeon General of the United States.

The Y is the nation's leading community-based network committed to improving health and well-being in the 10,000 communities we serve. We were honored to work with Dr. Murthy in the past to advance the importance of physical activity to prevent and control chronic disease and to build healthier environments that ensure access to physical activity and healthy eating where people live, work, learn, play and pray. We are grateful for his vision of creating a culture of health that recognizes the important role community and social service organizations play in improving health outcomes by addressing the social determinants of health and by building deeper collaboration between the community and the formal health care system.

Dr. Murthy deeply understands and appreciates the role that chronic diseases, mental health and social isolation are having on our nation; both in terms in increasing hospitalizations and fatalities due to COVID-19 but also the health crisis that awaits us once we get past the pandemic. Our population has spent the last year living increasing more sedentary lifestyles with less access to healthy affordable and available foods and have been isolated from loved ones and friends. All ages, but especially our oldest and our youngest, are facing a deep physical and mental health crisis that Dr. Murthy not only comprehends but will urgently address. The unique health challenges during the pandemic and those emerging from COVID-19 will require his unique background and expertise and will serve our country well.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also unmasked deep health disparities among black and brown communities that stem from decades of inequities, highlighting the way poverty, poor housing, lack of transportation, inadequate education and food deserts have impacted health outcomes.

YMCA OF THE USA
101 N Wacker Drive, Chicago IL 60606
P 800 872 9622 F 312 977 9063 ymca.net

In our years of work with Dr. Murthy, he has always prioritized the need to address these inequities to prevent premature deaths, prevent disease, improve health outcomes and productivity, and reduce health care spending.

When the Committee and the full Senate moves to consider Dr. Murthy for confirmation, we want you to know of our support for Dr. Murthy as the Surgeon General. His demonstrated leadership and his depth of experience and commitment to public health should earn him swift confirmation by the full Senate.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Neal Denton".

Neal Denton
SVP and Chief Government Affairs Officer
YMCA of the USA



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

1620 EYE STREET, NORTHWEST
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February 26, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chair
 Committee on Health, Education,
 Labor, and Pensions
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education,
 Labor, and Pensions
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of the nation's mayors, we are writing to express our strong support for the nomination of Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States and urge your swift confirmation. As America's Doctor from 2014-2017, Dr. Murthy created initiatives to tackle some of our country's most urgent and pressing public health challenges and worked diligently with the Conference and mayors on several shared national priorities. This includes:

- Issuing a call to action to the nation to recognize substance use disorders as a chronic illness and not a moral failing;
- Highlighting the health risks of e-cigarette use for youth; and issuing the first federal report on e-cigarettes,
- Launching efforts to increase physical activity and health prevention in cities across the country;
- Demystifying vaccines for parents and children;
- As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika;
- And so much more.

In 2017, Dr. Murthy shifted his focus and attention on highlighting how chronic stress and isolation are prevalent problems that have profound implications for health, productivity, and happiness. Additionally, he served as a trusted advisor on public health to many of the nation's mayors and other key leaders when called upon.

Lastly as co-chair of the President's COVID-19 Advisory Board, Dr. Murthy has regularly joined key convenings of USCM and mayors to highlight the work of the Biden Administration in responding and recovering from the current public health emergency and to forge a strong federal, state and local partnership. Furthermore, he has supported increased assistance to cities and our community partners to foster safe social distancing and other public health interventions, sustained investments in our public health infrastructure and workforce, and promoted health equity to ensure our most vulnerable citizens thrive.

As a result, the nation's mayor strongly support Dr. Murthy resuming his role as Surgeon General as he is most qualified, compassionate, and a critical leader that can be counted on during the current public health emergency and well beyond as we tackle other health challenges and promote wellness. Thank you for your careful consideration; and the nation's mayors urge you to move his nomination swiftly through the HELP Committee and vote in support before the full Senate.

Sincerely,



Greg Fischer
Mayor of Louisville
President, The United States
Conference of Mayors



Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
The United States Conference of
Mayors



The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chair
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
 Pensions
 United States Senate
 154 Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
 Pensions
 United States Senate
 217 Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Feb. 24, 2021

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of more than 7,000 chronic disease prevention and control professionals in every US state and territory, I am writing to support the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy, M.D., MBA to serve as Surgeon General of the United States.

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) was founded in 1988 in partnership with CDC to help build the capacity and effectiveness of state health departments to reduce the burden of chronic disease in our nation. NACDD is the primary organization representing all state and jurisdictional chronic disease staff, dedicated to building capacity and improving public health.

As the 19th U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy brought critical focus to establishing a culture of disease prevention, which continues to influence NACDD's work and that of state chronic disease programs today. During his previous term, he led the creation of the *Surgeon General's Report on E-cigarette Use Among Youth*, which is the first federal report on e-cigarettes that highlights their health risks and recognizes that e-cigarettes are a threat to public health. He also issued *Step It Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities* to promote physical activity as a critical tool for preventing chronic conditions.

We believe Dr. Murthy will continue to bring attention to these and other issues in his second term as Surgeon General, especially in work that emphasizes the role chronic disease prevention can play in reducing long-term COVID-19-related death and morbidity.

NACDD strongly encourages the HELP Committee to quickly report to the full Senate the appointment of Dr. Murthy to serve as Surgeon General. Thank you for your consideration.

In Good Health,

John W. Robitscher, M.P.H.
 Chief Executive Officer
 National Association of Chronic Disease Directors



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Dr. Vivek Murthy – Surgeon General of the United States Recommendation

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), representing nearly 1,400 health center organizations and 30 million patients, I am writing to express our strong support for the appointment of Dr. Vivek Murthy to be the next Surgeon General of the United States.

During the present COVID-19 crisis, Community Health Centers have stood on the frontlines, providing critically needed testing services, and now vaccinations, to hard hit communities and populations who have suffered disproportionately. We are particularly concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on our patients who are members of racial and ethnic minorities, people experiencing homelessness, and our agricultural workers.

COVID-19 – with more than 500,000 U.S. deaths, is the defining public health crisis of our time. The Committee is well-aware of Dr. Murthy's stellar qualifications and decades of experience – both as a practicing physician and as a former Surgeon General who served during the Obama Administration. During his tenure, he led efforts to address the opioid crisis, Ebola, Zika, e-cigarette use among young people, and much more. We urge Dr. Murthy's swift confirmation by the Senate -- to help address the pandemic now, and to help ensure a stronger health care delivery system for the future.

We thank you and the Committee again for your steadfast dedication to our nation's system of Community Health Centers and the people we serve – many of whom are the low-wage workers who are the very backbone of the American economy, in thousands of vulnerable

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Senate HELP Committee
Page 2

communities from coast to coast. Thank you for your quick consideration of Dr. Murthy's appointment as Surgeon General of the United States.

Sincerely,



Tom Van Coverden,
President and CEO



cc: Ronald Klain, White House Chief of Staff



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Phone: 703.575.9400
AIIrise.org

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February 10, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and the 40,000 justice and substance use treatment professionals working in nearly 4,000 American drug courts, I write to express support for Dr. Vivek H. Murthy to be the next surgeon general of the United States of America.

Dr. Murthy's compassion and commitment to the health and well-being of all Americans is extraordinary. His academic and professional career includes a long history of innovation and outreach to communities and individuals. While a student at Harvard University, Dr. Murthy co-founded VISIONS Worldwide, a nonprofit organization focused on HIV/AIDS education in the U.S. and India connecting tens of thousands of students with peer-to-peer education. Dr. Murthy also co-founded Doctors for America, a nonprofit organization with more than 18,000 physician and medical student members from all 50 states dedicated to creating a high-quality, affordable health care system for all.

During his first term as surgeon general, Dr. Murthy led a national movement to address the opioid crisis, issuing a groundbreaking report in 2016 on alcohol, drugs, and health. He was the first surgeon general in our nation's history to call for expanded access to substance use prevention and treatment and to recognize addiction as a chronic illness, not a character flaw. In addition to the report, Dr. Murthy sent letters to 2.3 million health care providers urging them to do their part to curb the opioid crisis.

Upon leaving the office of surgeon general, Dr. Murthy focused his work on chronic stress and isolation. His 2020 book, *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*, identifies loneliness as a public health concern and a contributor to many other epidemics, including alcohol and drug addiction, violence, depression, and anxiety. Loneliness, he argues, affects not only our physical health, but also how children experience school, how adults perform in the workplace, and contributes to the sense of division and polarization in our society. His book highlights the need for meaningful human connection and how to make those connections.

Given his qualifications and commitment to the health and wellbeing of this nation, I am honored to support the nomination of Dr. Vivek H. Murthy to be surgeon general of the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Carson Fox
Chief Executive Officer





February 19, 2021

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Robert L. L. Morrison

Senator Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard Burr
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD), I am writing in support of the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy as the United States Surgeon General. We believe Dr. Murthy has the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to educate Americans about how to improve their health and reduce the risk of illness and injury.

Dr. Murthy previously served as the 19th Surgeon General of the United States, leading a uniformed service of 6,600 public health officers across the nation and internationally. During his tenure, Dr. Murthy helped address some of the nation's most pressing health issues, including substance use disorders. He authored *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*, which was the nation's first Surgeon General's Report on addiction. In 2016, Dr. Murthy sent a letter to over 2 million health care professionals urging them to take an active role in tackling opioid addiction and overdose. Dr. Murthy also wrote the first federal report on e-cigarettes, *Surgeon General's Report on E-cigarette Use Among Youth*.

During his tenure as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy worked to ensure an open line of communication with State alcohol and drug agencies. For example, in August 2015, Dr. Murthy traveled to Washington State to provide the keynote address at NASADAD's prevention conference. In addition, Dr. Murthy engaged in a dialogue with our Board of Directors during that same trip. We appreciate his work to communicate with the managers of the publicly funded alcohol and drug service system.

Dr. Murthy received his bachelor's degree from Harvard and his M.D. and M.B.A. degrees from Yale. He completed his internal medicine residency at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and then joined Harvard Medical School as faculty in internal medicine. In addition to practicing and teaching medicine, he has co-founded several public health nonprofit organizations with a goal of improving health equity. He has also conducted research on vaccines and health care services and has been published in several peer-reviewed medical journals. Most recently, Dr. Murthy was a co-chair of the COVID-19 Task Force that advised President Biden's transition.

We strongly support the confirmation of Dr. Murthy to again serve in that role. We look forward to working with you as the nomination process moves forward.

Robert Morrison
Executive Director
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)



CARING
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GENERATIONS

NATIONAL DOMESTIC
WORKERS ALLIANCE

45 Broadway, Suite 320
New York, NY 10006
646. 350. 5806
CARINGACROSS.ORG
DOMESTICWORKERS.ORG

March 3, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of Caring Across Generations and National Domestic Workers Alliance, I write to express our strong support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a passionate and effective physician with high-impact public health experience. He previously served as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and we believe he is well positioned to serve the country once again in this role.

During his previous service, Dr. Murthy led important public health initiatives focusing on topics such as addiction, childhood immunization, and mental health. As Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Dr. Murthy also helped manage the country's response to Ebola and Zika, experience that will prove invaluable in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Dr. Murthy's recent work as co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board during the Biden-Harris Transition will enable him to get started on day one to support the federal government's pandemic response.

The National Domestic Workers Alliance is the nation's leading voice for dignity and fairness for the more than 2.5 domestic workers in the United States. Caring Across Generations represents the estimated 53 million family caregivers across the country fighting for supports and services at every stage of life. The pandemic only highlighted what domestic workers and caregivers knew all along: care jobs are the engine of our economy and society. Caregivers have been on the frontlines taking care of our communities while risking their health and the health of their families. As a member of President Biden's COVID-19 Transition Advisory Board, Dr. Murthy has



**NATIONAL DOMESTIC
WORKERS ALLIANCE**

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DOMESTICWORKERS.ORG

been a strong advocate to ensure that everyone, including caregivers, has the information and help they need to fight COVID-19. Given his previous experience as surgeon general, he will be able to hit the ground running on day one to support the federal government's pandemic response and ensure all of America is cared for and healthy.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer our strong support for Dr. Vivek Murthy's nomination. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ai-jen Poo", written in a cursive style.

Ai-jen Poo
Executive Director



8403 Colesville Road, Suite 820
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
(202) 347-1895
www.NMAnet.org

February 24, 2021

Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the National Medical Association (NMA), I would like to express our strongest support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek H. Murthy for the position of United States Surgeon General. Dr. Murthy served as an exemplary U.S. Surgeon under President Obama and created initiatives to tackle the country's most urgent public health issues. Dr. Murthy's experience as an internal medicine specialist with impeccable credentials will be instrumental in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, the worst public health crises in 100 years. He will again serve our country, respecting in every way, the scientific realities and evidence based analysis regarding the state of health care and health care delivery in the nation.

The NMA is the oldest and largest nonprofit national professional, educational, and scientific organization representing the interests of African American physicians and the millions of multi-ethnic patients they serve. The NMA is celebrating 125 years of work to improve the health status and outcomes of people made vulnerable by racism, geography, socioeconomic, bias, and disability. We are honored to have Dr. Murthy serving as one of the co-chairs of our 125th Anniversary committee. The NMA continues to promote health equity, address health disparities and adverse health conditions that disproportionately impact persons of color.

The NMA has engaged with Dr. Murthy many times during his tenure as the 19th U.S. Surgeon General, and most recently as one of our esteemed panelist for the Edith Irby Jones, MD Plenary Session at our Annual Convention and Scientific Assembly in August 2020 which addressed COVID-19 and the Black Community. Dr. Murthy and the NMA have an history of working together on health disparities. He has been a champion for underserved and underrepresented communities, recognizing the overwhelming impact that social determinants of health have on the health outcomes for those communities. His initiatives on e-cigarette use in youth, the opioid crisis, climate change and mental health all align with the priorities that the NMA has continually fought to address, and the reason why we support with great enthusiasm his nomination and subsequent confirmation as the 21st United States Surgeon General.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leon McDougle".

Leon McDougle, MD, MPH
President

February 24, 2021



Mark A. Emmert
President
P.O. Box 6222
Indianapolis, IN 46206
Telephone: 317-917-6222

Shipping/Overnight Address:
1802 Alonzo Watford Sr. Drive
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www.ncaa.org

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, I would like to express our overwhelming support for the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

In April 2019, Dr. Murthy was appointed to serve as one of the inaugural independent members of the NCAA Board of Governors, the Association's top governing body. Based upon a recommendation of former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the independent members were added to the volunteer board of college and university presidents hailing from across the United States in order to provide increased objectivity and outside perspectives to college athletic issues.

Throughout his tenure on the board, Dr. Murthy was a leader of leaders, consistently providing thoughtful counsel and perspective to the higher education community on a myriad of challenges affecting college sports. Perhaps one of the most difficult was the impact of COVID-19.

Dr. Murthy served on the NCAA COVID-19 Advisory Panel which helped guide the Association's response to the pandemic. The panel included leading medical, public health and epidemiology experts from their respective fields and NCAA member schools. The insights of panel members, led by Dr. Murthy, were integral to the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Final Four as well as all remaining winter and spring NCAA championships. At a time when COVID-19 was still a mystery to the world, Dr. Murthy's insight and guidance were instrumental to taking this important – yet unprecedented action.

It is an understatement to declare that Dr. Murthy has been an important presence on our board during a very challenging time for intercollegiate athletics. We have greatly benefited from his experience and expertise. He is a terrific example of the valuable perspectives we hoped to gain when we first added independent members to the board.

National Collegiate Athletic Association

Creating a pathway to opportunity for college athletes

The NCAA is an equal opportunity employer that values inclusive excellence in the workplace.

The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Richard Burr
February 24, 2021
Page No. 2

Dr. Murthy's commitment to college sports also included service on the Independent Accountability Oversight Committee, which oversees the review of select complex cases involving the violation of NCAA rules. Dr. Murthy's presence and engagement helped instill integrity, efficiency and effectiveness in this new process.

Higher education institutions across the country have greatly benefited from Dr. Murthy's expertise. He brings thoughtful perspectives informed by data and best practice to any decision. Indeed, while his impressive medical expertise has been invaluable, we also have benefited from his keen judgment, deep insights and the thoughtful approach he takes to everything he does.

Given his expertise, qualifications, experience and character, the American people would be in excellent hands with Dr. Murthy as our United States Surgeon General.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Emmert
NCAA President



March 16, 2021

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South Asian Bar Association of North America
South Asian Public Health Association
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

NCAPA is a project of Tides Center

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) Health Committee strongly supports the confirmation of Dr. Vivek Murthy for Surgeon General of the United States. We believe Dr. Murthy is preeminently capable and qualified for this important position within the Administration.

NCAPA is a coalition of 37 national Asian Pacific American organizations. Based in Washington D.C., NCAPA serves to represent the interests of the greater Asian American (AA) and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (NHPI) communities and to provide a national voice for AA and NHPI issues.

As you are well aware, Dr. Murthy is an outstanding physician and dedicated public servant whose character is beyond reproach. His rank as Vice Admiral within the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, speaks to the strength of his leadership. His first appointment as Surgeon General by President Barack Obama reflects his preparedness to serve within the federal government at the highest level.

Our country is still reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whomever is selected as Surgeon General will join you in facing the greatest public health crisis of our time. The stakes could not be higher, and our country needs an individual who can exercise reasoned judgement even when under the greatest pressure—Dr. Murthy fits the bill as well as anyone in the country.

For years, barriers to access to healthcare have been erected for communities of color, while our confidence and trust in our health system has been eroded. We need visible leadership such as Dr. Murthy to begin the important task of rebuilding that trust.

For these reasons, the NCAPA Health Committee strongly urges you to confirm Dr. Murthy for Surgeon General of the United States.

Sincerely,

NCAPA Health Committee



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Chairwoman, Council of Young Physicians
New York, NY

Kellie Mulliz, MD
Chairwoman, Council of Residents
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Donald Rodríguez
President, Latino Medical Student Association
Chicago, IL

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Bronx, NY

Yasmine Winkler, MBA
Former CEO, Central Region
United Health Care
Chicago, IL

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Pensions Labor
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

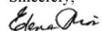
Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA), I would like to express our strong support for the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a well-respected physician and public health leader, who will again serve the country well in this role. He understands the important need for public health leadership and education to the nation's most vulnerable communities in this COVID-19 pandemic to continue to mask, quarantine, test, trace and vaccinate.

The NHMA represents 50,000 Hispanic physicians who are dedicated to improving the health of Hispanics and other underserved communities. Our members are at the front lines in community health centers, nursing homes, hospitals and in private practices and are some of the most trusted individuals for the Hispanic patients and community about the pandemic and the vaccine uptake. Dr. Murthy has addressed a past NHMA Annual Conference and has addressed public health and medical leaders on key issues needed to be addressed by all who are caring for the most vulnerable and isolated in our nation with limited or no access to health care or mental health care.

Dr. Murthy has key experience for the role of Surgeon General. He served previously as a Harvard professor, HIV non-profit leader in India, as well as the Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, and received high marks for his accomplishments. He focused on education on smoking and e-cigarettes, opioid abuse, climate change, the Flint, MI drinking water crisis, ebola and zika, mental health, and supporting the Affordable Care Act. Most recently, he was named co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board to help the incoming Biden administration coordinate its response and vaccine distribution.

In summary, NHMA strongly encourages the HELP Committee support the nomination of Dr. Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. For any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Elena Rios, MD, MSPH, FACP
President & CEO
National Hispanic Medical Association



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chair
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
 Pensions
 United States Senate
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
 Pensions
 United States Senate
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of Partnership to End Addiction, I would like to express strong support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Partnership to End Addiction is a nonprofit organization that mobilizes families, policymakers, researchers, and health care professionals to more effectively address addiction systemically on a national scale. Our mission is to transform how our nation addresses addiction by empowering families, advancing effective care, shaping public policy, and changing culture.

We believe that as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy would help us in this endeavor because he has a demonstrated record of recognizing addiction as a health crisis and advancing evidence- and health-based solutions.

In his time as Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017, Dr. Murthy demonstrated that addiction is a priority issue. In 2016, he issued the landmark report *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*, the first ever Surgeon General's report on substance use and addiction. It issued a needed call to action to end the addiction crisis and presented a public health approach grounded in science to do so. The same year, Dr. Murthy also issued a vital report on e-cigarette use among youth and young adults, placing important emphasis on the risks of substance use and addiction to youth and the importance of evidence-based prevention. Dr. Murthy also focused efforts on addressing mental health and on adolescent health, including mental health and substance use. The reports and other efforts helped not only to advance effective policies, but also to reduce stigma associated with addiction.

The Surgeon General must raise the profile of substance use disorder as an issue that needs a public health approach. At this time in particular, when overdose deaths have reached record levels and the COVID-19 pandemic has led to both the increasing onset of substance use disorders and the exacerbation of existing ones through increased isolation, anxiety, dire economic consequences, and barriers to accessing substance use services, it is imperative that there is focus on addressing the addiction crisis.

To address the overlapping public health crises currently facing our nation, Partnership to End Addiction strongly encourages the Committee to swiftly report to the full Senate the nomination of Dr. Murthy to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Thank you for your consideration.



Sincerely,


Creighton Drury
Chief Executive Officer



601 13th St. NW, Suite 430N
Washington, DC 20005
thepec.org

PCC Letter of Support for Dr. Vivek Murthy's Nomination as Surgeon General

March 5, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

The Primary Care Collaborative strongly supports the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to become U.S. Surgeon General. As a multi-stakeholder coalition of 60+ organizational members representing clinicians, payers, purchasers, and patients, the Primary Care Collaborative (PCC) calls for public and private leadership to take bold actions to bolster the health of our nation. Dr. Murthy has already proven that he is the right person to lead that charge. In the midst of this global public health crisis, he brings experience, vision and evidence-based sensibility to get us through the COVID-19 pandemic stronger for the health challenges that lie ahead.

The PCC has long advocated for the science, systems, and personal relationships to ensure individuals and families can lead healthy lives. Dr. Murthy's impressive experience and adept public messaging has consistently lifted up all three. First, at a time of critical need for vaccine acceptance and better information on the coronavirus, he has committed to unconditionally basing the country's public health efforts in science and effectively promoting those messages to health care workers and the broader public. Today, such leadership is critical: vaccine hesitancy is alarmingly high, particularly [among communities of color](#) who have been [hit hardest](#) by the COVID-19 pandemic. Primary care clinicians are [well-positioned](#) to advise patients on the importance of vaccines, but they need support from federal leaders and robust education campaigns to complement their efforts—the kind of messaging Dr. Murthy has pledged to lead as Surgeon General.

Convening + Uniting + Transforming

Second, Dr. Murthy has a proven commitment to strengthening the country's public health and health care delivery systems to better serve patients and their communities. COVID-19 has further exposed a wide gulf between public health and primary care, as well as the underinvestment in both sectors. Going forward, we believe the two must be better-resourced and closely linked to ensure good health. Primary care has played a key role triaging, tracking, and treating COVID-19 cases, but needs better coordination, bi-directional communication with local and state officials, and more support. Dr. Murthy will continue his work to ensure health care professionals and practices work collaboratively with public health officials, businesses, universities, researchers, and community leaders to advance better health, particularly among under-served communities.

Finally, Dr. Murthy defines health the way the primary care community defines health: as the physical, mental, and social well-being of individuals. He has brought prominent attention to the devastating impact of substance use disorder (SUD) in this country, including educating clinicians on the risks of prescribed opioid painkillers and calling for better screening and evidence-based treatment for SUD as a chronic condition. More recently, he recognized the dire toll the pandemic has taken on the mental health of Americans, calling for better insurance coverage for behavioral health, school-based mental health counseling, and increased integration of behavioral health and primary care. In a Green Center/PCC national survey of primary care clinicians, nearly [90% report](#) seeing higher levels of mental health concerns among their patients and [over half say](#) they field weekly calls from patients or colleagues who are experiencing a mental health crisis. We urgently need a Surgeon General who will bring attention and resources to addressing this critical need.

The Primary Care Collaborative offers its strong endorsement of Dr. Murthy to become U.S. Surgeon General for a second time. He is a proven leader who has effectively confronted health crises under the Obama Administration; we now need him to lead again to help our country recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and help re-invent a better public health system in the process. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support.

Sincerely,



Ann Greiner
President & CEO
Primary Care Collaborative

PCC Executive Members

Below is a list of the Primary Care Collaborative's executive members that pay dues to the organization and support its mission. Membership does not indicate explicit endorsement of this letter.

AARP
 Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC)
 Alzheimer's Association
 American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
 American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)
 American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
 American Academy of PAs (AAPA)
 American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP)
 American Board of Family Medicine Foundation (ABFM Foundation)
 American Board of Internal Medicine Foundation (ABIM Foundation)
 American Cancer Society
 American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP)
 American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM)
 American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP)
 American College of Osteopathic Internists (ACOI)
 American College of Physicians (ACP)
 American Psychiatric Association Foundation
 American Psychological Association
 America's Agenda
 Anthem
 Ascension Medical Group
 Black Women's Health Imperative (BWHI)
 Blue Cross Blue Shield Michigan
 Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
 CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield
 Community Care of North Carolina
 CVS Health
 Geisinger Health
 Harvard Medical School Center for Primary Care
 HealthTeamWorks
 Humana, Inc.
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 Johns Hopkins Community Physicians, Inc.
 Johnson & Johnson
 Mathematica Policy Research
 Mental Health America
 Merck & Co.
 Morehouse School of Medicine - National Center for Primary Care
 National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions

National Association of ACOs (NAACOS)
National Coalition on Health Care
National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health (NIIOH)
National PACE Association
National Partnership for Women and Families
NCQA
Purchaser Business Group on Health (PBGH)
PCC EHR Solutions
Pediatric Innovation Center
Primary Care Development Corporation (PCDC)
Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM)
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM)
SS&C Health
St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition
Takeda Pharmaceuticals U.S.A.
The Verden Group's Patient Centered Solutions
UPMC Health Plan
URAC



STRONGER THAN ADDICTION

March 3, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of Shatterproof, a national non-profit dedicated to reversing the addiction crisis in America, I would like to express my strongest possible support for President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

I suspect you have many recommendations related to Dr. Murthy's background and credentials. They are unquestionably a superb fit for this position. In this regard, instead of repeating these credentials, I would like to express my personal experience with Dr. Murthy while he was previously Surgeon General.

During Dr. Murthy's previous term as Surgeon General I had the honor of meeting him and getting to know him personally. Tragically, I am a father who lost a son to addiction. I found Dr. Murthy to be of the utmost integrity, emphatic, and human. While also comforting me, he also inspired me. He is a man to look up to, to aspire to be like. As passionate as I am in my quest to help others, he inspired me to want to do more. And to be a better person.

In addition, as most of us in the field know, stigma is the largest barrier to ensuring what we all want – to prevent as many of our loved from developing a substance use disorder, and for those who have developed this disease, receive treatment that is based on science, just like someone with any other disease. Doing so will prevent countless families from having to experience their worst nightmare, burying a loved one.

Dr. Murthy recognizes the barrier that stigma creates and is a leader in field working to reduce it. Below is a quote of his that Shatterproof incorporated into our annual report:

"Stigma has created an added burden of shame that has made people with substance use disorders less likely to come forward and seek help... We must help everyone see that addiction is not a character flaw – it is a chronic illness that we must approach with the same skill and compassion with which we approach heart disease, diabetes, and cancer." – Vivek Murthy, former US Surgeon General

In closing, I believe Dr. Murthy is uniquely qualified to the position of Surgeon General of the United States and I fully support his nomination. If I can speak with anyone or do anything to further support his nomination, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

My warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gary Mendell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gary Mendell
Founder, Chairman

101 Merritt 7 Corporate Park, 1st Floor • Norwalk, CT 06851 • shatterproof.org • 800-597-2557



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Tucson, Arizona

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Eric E. Howell, MD, MHM

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of the nation's hospitalists, the Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM) strongly supports the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a well-respected hospitalist with decades of public health expertise and brings unparalleled capability to a role that is incredibly important during a once in a lifetime public health crisis.

Hospitalists are physicians who manage the clinical care of acutely ill, hospitalized patients. The hospital medicine team includes physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and non-clinical staff who work together to ensure patients in the hospital receive the highest quality care possible. In addition to their core clinical expertise, hospitalists work to enhance the performance of hospitals and healthcare systems and engage in teaching, research, and leadership in the field of general hospital medicine.

Due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the care of severely ill COVID positive patients, hospitalists found themselves at the frontlines of the national response. Every day hospitalists risk their health and safety to ensure all patients, including COVID patients, receive the highest quality care possible. Dr. Murthy's training and experience as a hospitalist, combined with his extensive public health expertise, makes him particularly qualified to act as Surgeon General during this unprecedented pandemic.

Dr. Murthy was previously named co-chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Board. In this role, he led the development of the incoming Biden



Administration's COVID-19 response, which included vaccine distribution logistics and production. The depth of his involvement with the Biden administration's COVID-19 response plan will allow him to begin his critical work immediately once he is confirmed by the Senate.

Dr. Murthy's previous service as Surgeon General from 2014-2017 gives him added advantage and institutional knowledge to confront the pressing public health needs of the nation. His historic letter to physicians on the opioid epidemic in 2016 underscores his team-based approach to solving large, complex issues. In addition, he emphasized the importance of preventive care that is grounded in nutrition, healthy eating, physical activity, and emotional well-being. During his tenure, he managed the nation's response to Ebola, Zika, and the Flint, MI water crisis. He knows there are many public health needs simultaneous to and that will emerge after the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are confident in Dr. Murthy's ability to lead the nation in confronting and defeating current challenges and those that may arise during his service.

Dr. Murthy's track record of public service, public health expertise, and previous experience as Surgeon General demonstrates his unparalleled qualifications to serve in this role. As Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy will bring a demonstrated commitment to public service coupled with the quality-driven, results-oriented mindset of a hospitalist physician.

We urge you to advance his nomination to the position of Surgeon General of the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'E Howell'.

Eric Howell, MD, MHM
Chief Executive Officer
Society of Hospital Medicine



February 24, 2021

Hon. Patty Murray, Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the nation's leading impact philanthropy solely focused on mental health, addiction, and well-being, I am writing to express our strong support for the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. as the 21st Surgeon General of the United States.

Americans are entering a second year of the COVID-19 pandemic compounding the ever-increasing mental health epidemic. More than 26 million individuals are experiencing mental health illness without treatment. While the year-end funding package and stimulus contained some support for mental health and substance use-related programs, there has been a severe lack of funding and prioritization of mental health services across all levels of government. People in every community across the country are suffering.

We need strong leaders like Dr. Murthy in office immediately to meet the needs of this moment and help bring relief to millions of Americans. As Surgeon General under the Obama Administration, Dr. Murthy went on a listening tour of America to hear firsthand about people's health concerns, learning that loneliness is deeply associated with an increased risk of heart disease, dementia, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances and even premature death. He also focused heavily on combating the opioid epidemic and prioritized emotional well-being as a key component underlying all public health issues.

When he was 19th US Surgeon General, Well Being Trust partnered to advance his, and the Veterans Administration's leadership on emotional well-being, addressing the factors that underlay soaring rates of deaths of despair. In the interim years while he was out of office, we had the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Murthy with him serving as a citizen advocate, as a Well Being Trust Senior Fellow, helping advance the mental health and well-being of every resident of the United States.

Dr. Murthy, a strong mental health champion, is uniquely qualified to address both the physical and mental health needs Americans are facing today. As a key member of President Biden's COVID-19 task force, he is well versed in the effects the pandemic has had on Americans well-being and his leadership will be critical to reversing the effects of the mental health crisis.

We believe Dr. Murthy is committed to addressing the gaps in programs and policies that promote and advance mental health, reduce stigma, and expand access to critical mental health and addiction care. We look forward to working with Dr. Murthy on the urgent state of mental health in America and bringing mental health to the forefront of all public health solutions.

Sincerely,
Tyler Norris
Tyler Norris, CEO
Well Being Trust tyler@wellbeingtrust.org

Yale OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

PO Box 208229
New Haven CT 06520-8229
T 203 432-2550

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation in support of President Biden's nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A., to the position of Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Murthy is a 2003 graduate of the Yale School of Medicine and the Yale School of Management, where he earned his M.D. and M.B.A., respectively.

Throughout his life, Dr. Murthy has demonstrated a commitment to innovation and problem-solving in order to tackle some of the most critical public health challenges facing our nation and the world. As an undergraduate, he co-founded VISIONS, a non-profit organization that connected American college students with peers in India to promote HIV/AIDS education. Later, he created TrialNetworks, which uses the power of technology to support success in clinical trials. He is also the founder of Doctors for America, a network of 18,000 doctors and medical students advocating for improved health care in the United States.

After graduating from Yale, Dr. Murthy completed his residency in internal medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. He served as a hospitalist at the Brigham and was a faculty member at Harvard Medical School. In 2011, he served on President Obama's advisory group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative Public Health.

As surgeon general from 2014 to 2017, Dr. Murthy prioritized efforts to use science to understand and treat addiction and end the opioid crisis; promote healthy behaviors such as exercise; encourage vaccination among children; and understand the health effects of e-cigarettes on young people, among other issues. As vice admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, he oversaw the corps' response to emergencies including Ebola, Zika, the Flint water crisis, and major natural disasters. Through his writing and speaking, Dr. Murthy has brought national attention to the pervasive problem of loneliness, which affects millions of Americans.

The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Richard Burr
February 24, 2021
Page 2

Dr. Murthy continues to be engaged with the Yale community and takes time to participate in events for students, who look to him as a humanistic physician. They are inspired by his success at blending clinical practice with work in domestic and international public health.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Murthy has demonstrated a commitment to public service. Yale is proud of his efforts to improve the health and well-being of Americans and of people around the world, and I am honored to support his nomination as the next Surgeon General of the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Salovey".

Peter Salovey
President
Chris Argyris Professor of Psychology

LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR THE NOMINATION OF RACHEL LEVINE TO
SERVE AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Ryan Whyte, Civic Engagement Coordinator | 412-979-1889 | ryan@1hood.org
1Hood Power
460 Melwood Ave STE 204
Pittsburgh, PA 15241

2/22/2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Confirmation of Dr. Levine's appointment to serve as Assistant Secretary of Health

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee,

I am the Civic Engagement Coordinator at 1Hood Power, a social advocacy organization committed to building power in Black communities across Pennsylvania. Speaking both on behalf of myself and as a representative of this organization, I am writing to strongly urge you to confirm the appointment of Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as Assistant Secretary of Health.

Given her background as the current President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and as the current Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the sixth most populous state in the nation, Dr. Levine is uniquely qualified to coordinate collaborative efforts between federal and state Health Departments to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Dr. Levine's formal expertise in a wide array of public health areas, such as the opioid crisis, adolescent medicine, eating disorders, and LGBT medicine, establish her ability to address any number of current or future public health crises in a similar manner.

Additionally, as a resident of Pennsylvania, I have observed Dr. Levine demonstrate an unwavering commitment to transparency and public engagement by consistently holding press

conferences to answer questions and provide updates to the public over the course of the pandemic. This level of commitment held by Dr. Levine demonstrates her crucial emphasis on prioritizing public health regardless of the circumstances.

For all of these listed reasons, I would like to reiterate our firm belief that Dr. Levine is fully qualified to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Health and that her appointment to do so should be confirmed.

Sincerely,

Ryan Whyte
Civic Engagement Coordinator, 1Hood Power



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
United States Senate

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

The current issues confronting our healthcare system are among the most difficult that our nation has ever faced: rapidly increasing insurance and prescription drug prices, the raging opioid epidemic, and the largest public health crisis in modern history brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. States need a partner at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that has experience confronting these issues head on. Dr. Rachel Levine has worked as a pediatric physician, established adolescent medicine and eating disorder clinics, and served as Physician General, and later Secretary of Health, for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. She is uniquely qualified to partner with states to keep citizens safe and healthy while navigating the pandemic and a post-pandemic world. Therefore, I urge the Senate to confirm Dr. Levine quickly and with strong bipartisan support.

When COVID-19 emerged in the U.S., Dr. Levine was laser focused on keeping the citizens of Pennsylvania safe. She instituted swift and proactive measures that were previously considered unimaginable because she understood the toll that would be taken by this pandemic otherwise. Dr. Levine oversaw the implementation of data-driven mitigation efforts across Pennsylvania that were vital in keeping COVID-19 case numbers and death rates low. Once the vaccine became available to states, Dr. Levine turned her focus to ensuring an effective, efficient, and equitable rollout in the early stages. Because of her leadership, Pennsylvania became a model for other states to follow when developing their own COVID-19 responses.

Dr. Levine understands the impact of the opioid epidemic and its devastating effect on families across the United States. In her capacity as Physician General of Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine signed an order allowing all law enforcement officers to carry the anti-overdose medication naloxone. This effort alone has saved thousands of lives in Pennsylvania. Dr. Levine has also partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs to assist in combatting the opioid epidemic, setting up free naloxone distribution points and education programs across the commonwealth to fight addiction and the stigma surrounding it.

We need health officials who lead with data-driven and scientific principles, as well as compassion and empathy. Dr. Levine is precisely the person to meet this moment. Her experience as a physician, as well as her leadership at the Pennsylvania Department of Health during an unprecedented pandemic and vaccination rollout, more than qualify her for this role at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as we begin to move forward as a nation. I know that Dr. Levine can do this, and I look forward to working with her in her new role.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Wolf". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "T" and "W".

TOM WOLF
Governor

American Academy of Pediatrics



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February 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I write to offer my strong support of Rachel Levine, MD, FAAP for the position of Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We urge Dr. Levine's swift confirmation by the Senate.

Dr. Levine is a pediatrician who is board certified in both pediatrics and adolescent medicine. She has been a longstanding member of the AAP and the AAP Section on Adolescent Health. Prior to her work as a public health official in state government, Dr. Levine was a practicing pediatrician and a leader in academic medicine. She served as Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs for the Department of Pediatrics and was Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders at Penn State Hershey Medical Center.

As Physician General and Secretary of Health in Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine led key initiatives on a number of child health issues including immunizations, disaster preparedness, lead exposure, maternal and infant mortality, and substance use. She helped lead Pennsylvania's response to the opioid epidemic. Throughout the present COVID-19 crisis, Dr. Levine has played a critical role in the state's efforts to slow the spread of the virus, prepare the health care system to treat COVID patients, and implement statewide COVID testing. In recognition of her exemplary public service, last July, Dr. Levine was selected as the 2020 recipient of the AAP Child Health Advocate Award.

The position of Assistant Secretary for Health is a critical one under normal circumstances and is even more so given the current crisis. It oversees not only the Office of the Surgeon General and the Public Health Service, but key offices with responsibility for vaccine policy, adolescent health, women's health, minority health, and disease prevention. Dr. Levine's experience and leadership skills will serve her well in this important role.

We look forward to working with the committee and Dr. Levine to address health issues of critical importance to America's children.

Sincerely,

Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP
President

LSB/jdb

Government and Professional Affairs
1455 Pennsylvania Avenue
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20004-2514
202.621.1820
202.621.1819 [fax]
www.accp.com



February 15, 2021

Dear Dr. Levine:

Rachel Levine, MD
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 715-G
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Dr. Levine:

On behalf of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) I am writing to congratulate you on your nomination as the Assistant Secretary of Health and to voice our support for your confirmation to this vital position in the Biden Administration.

ACCP is a professional and scientific society that provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources enabling clinical pharmacists to achieve excellence in patient care practice and research. ACCP's membership is composed of over 20,000 clinical pharmacists, residents, fellows, students, scientists, educators and others who are committed to excellence in clinical pharmacy practice and evidence-based pharmacotherapy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented burdens on our nation's health delivery infrastructure. As communities across the country struggle to respond to the COVID pandemic, a comprehensive strategy to ensure a truly team-based, patient-centered approach to patient care consistent with evolving integrated delivery models, must be prioritized.

Throughout the COVID pandemic, pharmacists have been at the forefront of our nation's response efforts. This includes the vital work early in the pandemic to help scale up testing capabilities, and now pharmacists and pharmacies are at the center of the largest mass-vaccination in history.

Beyond the urgent work of pharmacists on the front lines of the pandemic response effort, clinical pharmacists typically practice as fully integrated members of the health care team, working under formal collaborative practice agreements or institutional privileges, to assume full responsibility for managing patients' medication therapies.

During this time of high health care demand, clinical pharmacists have enhanced access to care by integrating into teams as qualified medication experts trained and credentialed to provide comprehensive chronic care management.

Providing Leadership in Clinical Pharmacy Practice and Research

American College of Clinical Pharmacy • 13000 W. 87th St. Parkway • Lenexa KS 66215-4530 • (913) 492-3311
Michael S. Maddux, Pharm.D., FCCP, Executive Director

Comprehensive medication management (CMM) refers to the direct patient care process provided by clinical pharmacists working as formal members of the patient's health care team that has been demonstrated to significantly improve clinical outcomes and enhance the safety of medication use by patients.

As we reach a new stage in the global fight to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and address the sequelae of unaddressed health issues resulting from care avoidance during the pandemic, the issue of managing the safe and appropriate delivery of medications across an entire population takes center stage. This context provides a unique opportunity to improve patient care and decrease overall healthcare spending by advancing practice models that include CMM - the patient working in collaboration with the physician and a qualified clinical pharmacist.

With the federal government responsible for more than \$1 trillion per year in health care spending, and mandatory programs projected to overwhelm the entire federal budget, it is vital that we as a nation provide adequate resources to ensure that health care delivery organizations, health providers, policymakers, and the people they serve make informed choices about how to obtain the best care while addressing costs and protecting patient safety.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your team to as we collectively work to advance health care delivery models that ensure value and high quality patient outcomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McHale". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

Director, Government Affairs

Cc: Michael S. Maddux, Pharm.D. FCCP, Executive Director

**Disciples
LGBTQ+
Alliance**

Setting a place at the table
for persons of all gender
expressions and sexual
identities.

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

February 19, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman; Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member; and the
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions:

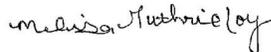
The Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance – AllianceQ serves the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and denominational partners, formally representing 215 congregations and more than 3,000 members and supporters. AllianceQ supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender-diverse people of faith; and we educate and equip faith communities for Open & Affirming Ministry. Our work is intersectional, also serving those marginalized by race, gender, class and immigration status.

As advocates for justice, we are advocating for the appointment of Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH). **We urge you to confirm the appointment of Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine, to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH).**

As Secretary of Health for the 6th most populous state in the country, Dr. Levine routinely works with the Assistant Secretary of Health's office to build critical bridges between federal and state policies on the pandemic and more. Her election as current President of ASTHO is a clear testament to the level of faith other public health leaders have in her leadership. To have a former state Secretary of Health in the ASH position in the coming months, when there is an urgent need for closer alliance between federal and state pandemic policies, will be invaluable.

We are confident that Dr. Levine is the best possible candidate to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health in this time of extraordinary demands on our public health system. **We strongly urge you to confirm this appointment with all deliberate speed.**

Building a more just Church and world,



Rev. Melissa Guthrie Loy
Executive Director + Minister

P.O. Box 44400
Indianapolis, IN 46244-0400

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info@disciplesallianceq.org

disciplesallianceq.org

All.

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Washington, DC 20004-2514
202.621.1820
202.621.1819 [fax]
www.accp.com



February 16, 2021

Rachel Levine, MD
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 715-G
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Dr. Levine:

On behalf of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) I am writing to congratulate you on your nomination as the Assistant Secretary of Health and to voice our support for your confirmation to this vital position in the Biden Administration.

ACCP is a professional and scientific society that provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources enabling clinical pharmacists to achieve excellence in patient care practice and research. ACCP's membership is composed of over 20,000 clinical pharmacists, residents, fellows, students, scientists, educators and others who are committed to excellence in clinical pharmacy practice and evidence-based pharmacotherapy.

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Michael S. Maddux, Pharm.D., FCCP, Executive Director

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With the federal government responsible for more than \$1 trillion per year in health care spending, and mandatory programs projected to overwhelm the entire federal budget, it is vital that we as a nation provide adequate resources to ensure that health care delivery organizations, health providers, policymakers, and the people they serve make informed choices about how to obtain the best care while addressing costs and protecting patient safety.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your team to as we collectively work to advance health care delivery models that ensure value and high quality patient outcomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McHale". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

Director, Government Affairs

Cc: Michael S. Maddux, Pharm.D. FCCP, Executive Director



Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray and Senator Burr,

American Pain Association, representing more than 100,000 pain care health professionals in the US, would like to strongly support the nomination of Dr Rachel Levine as the next Assistant Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Besides her commendable role in combating the opioid crisis in Pennsylvania as the Health Secretary, some of her other key qualities and achievements are as follows

- Dr. Levine has spent her career helping people, as a clinical provider, in teaching and at the PA Department of Health as Physician General and Secretary. If fortunate enough to be confirmed, Dr. Levine would be honored to continue her work to improve the health and well-being of all Americans.
- Dr. Levine has focused her career on issues at the intersection of physician health and mental health, including her work on eating disorders and substance abuse disorders.
- Dr. Levine's experience in academic medicine and her work as a state health official have prepared her for this role and she is ready.
- Dr. Levine is committed to advancing health equity to ensure all Americans can live a healthy and full life.

Although Pennsylvania will lose a great leader and caretaker, our nation will be truly served by having a person of her abilities and virtues at the Department of HHS.

With all this, we will strongly urge you to confirm her nomination.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sanjay Gupta", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sanjay Gupta, MD

President, American Pain Association



February 19, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals who champion the health of all people and communities, I write to express our full support for the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine as Assistant Secretary for Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She has both the knowledge and experience needed to successfully fill this critical role as we continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the many other health challenges we face as a nation. She is a well-qualified and dedicated public servant with the demonstrated experience, skills and expertise needed for this important role. Her nomination also paves the way for the first openly transgender nominee to be confirmed by the Senate.

As the secretary of health in Pennsylvania, she led the state's COVID-19 response protecting countless individuals and the critical health care and public health infrastructure needed to respond to this crisis. She also worked to address the state's opioid crisis, collaborating with the medical community to establish prescribing guidelines and develop prescribing education for medical students. She is also highly respected by her peers, serving as the president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials in 2020. I am confident that she will bring the same leadership to HHS as she works with the other members of President Biden's health team and the public health community to protect and improve the health of the public.

We look forward to working with Dr. Levine and other leaders at HHS to improve and strengthen the health of the nation and achieve health equity. Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding our support for her nomination.

Sincerely,

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director



800 Maine Avenue, S.W.
Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20024

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CEO and Medical Director

February 22, 2021

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Committee Members,

The American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty society representing more than 38,800 physician psychiatrists who treat mental health and substance use disorders, together with the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society (PaPS), support the nomination of Rachel Levine, M.D., as Assistant Secretary of Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We encourage the Senate to swiftly confirm Dr. Levine for this important post.

Dr. Levine's credentials as a leader in medicine are impeccable. She has served as the Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 2017, to the great benefit of Pennsylvanians. She is also professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at the Penn State College of Medicine and serves as President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. As Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health, Dr. Levine signed a standing order for naloxone, enabling pharmacies in Pennsylvania to dispense this life-saving opioid overdose treatment to thousands, and led efforts to establish opioid-prescribing guidelines and prescribing education for medical students. She has also led the COVID-19 response efforts in the Commonwealth.

The skills and commitment Dr. Levine brought to fighting the opioid epidemic in Pennsylvania now stand to benefit our nation as we navigate through and beyond COVID-19 and its impacts on mental health. She has been a leader at promoting the interconnection between physical and mental health. Dr. Levine is nationally recognized as an eating disorder expert and has been a leading force in the fight to recognize the toxic effects of bias in all aspects of health care. In fact, Dr. Levine traveled throughout the state as part of the Governor's efforts to educate the medical community and configure LGBTQ-inclusive programs and processes and promote access to fair and equitable health care services. In recognition of her exemplary efforts, APA awarded Dr. Levine our 2018 Jacob J. Javits Award, given to a public servant who has made significant contributions to the field of mental health and worked to better the lives of people with mental illness and underserved populations.

If confirmed, Dr. Levine will have an important platform to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and advance the availability of evidenced-based

treatment. She will be an important voice within the Biden Administration for the health and well-being of everyone in the country, including members of the LGBTQ community and those with mental health and substance use disorders. We urge the Senate to confirm her as Assistant Secretary for Health at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,



Saul M. Levin, M.D., M.P.A., FRCP-E, FRCPsych
CEO and Medical Director
American Psychiatric Association



Richard Silbert, MD, DLFAPA
President
Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society



Penn Medicine

Perelman School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania Health System

Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care

February 19, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman
The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Burr,

It is my honor to submit a letter in support of the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine to the position of Assistant Secretary for Health. I ask that this letter be submitted for the hearing record. I have known and worked with Dr. Levine for several years and am delighted to have the privilege to have done so. I met Dr. Levine when she was initially appointed by Governor Wolf to the position of Physician General of Pennsylvania and have continued to work on several initiatives with her following her promotion to Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Levine is an excellent leader and nationally recognized health care expert. I have seen her manage many health care related challenges, from the abrupt closing of a major health care center in Philadelphia, to the state's response to the opioid pandemic, to the state's response to Covid-19. She has demonstrated time and again an ability to quickly understand the issues at hand then create a policy-driven response focused on needs of the people.

As you very well know, the United States continues to face several health-related challenges and continues to need individuals in positions of leadership who are hard-working, capable, and skilled. Dr. Levine has all of these qualities. Dr. Levine will be a wonderful addition to President Biden's administration.

Respectfully,

Michael A. Ashburn, MD, MPH, MBA
Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care

Senior Fellow, Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics

Director, Penn Pain Medicine Center

CC: The Honorable Robert Casey and The Honorable Patrick Toomey

3400 Spruce Street • Philadelphia, PA 19104-4283



February 17, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) extends our enthusiastic support for the nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, to serve as assistant secretary for health at the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Dr. Levine is eminently qualified to help lead our nation's response to COVID-19 and the many other health challenges we face. A pediatrician by training, Dr. Levine brings expertise to help address health threats across the life cycle, including among our most at-risk populations.

As Pennsylvania's secretary of health and as president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, she has been a leading public health voice and understands the complexities and unique challenges we face in delivering quality public health services. In addition to Dr. Levine, we are deeply encouraged by the team nominated by President Biden to lead HHS.

Public health laboratories are an essential component of our nation's health system. APHL and our member laboratories, which monitor, detect and respond to a wide range of health threats, stand ready to collaborate on strengthening our nation's laboratory system, enhancing our testing capacity and modernizing our data reporting infrastructure.

We look forward to working with Dr. Levine to help advance our nation's health agenda.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott J. Becker" with a small checkmark at the end.

Scott J. Becker
Chief Executive Officer

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) works to strengthen laboratory systems serving the public's health in the U.S. and globally. APHL's member laboratories protect the public's health by monitoring and detecting infectious and foodborne diseases, environmental contaminants, terrorist agents, genetic disorders in newborns and other diverse health threats. Learn more at www.aphl.org.



Association of
American Medical Colleges
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20001-2399
T 202 828 0400
aamc.org

February 19, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) is pleased to support the nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, to be the Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and urges swift confirmation of Dr. Levine's nomination.

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 155 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; more than 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their more than 179,000 full-time faculty members, 92,000 medical students, 140,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. Consistent with their missions, AAMC members have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 response, from activating and refining hospital and community surge plans, advancing research to identify promising diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines, and supporting local public health mitigation strategies.

As you know, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) oversees HHS's public health agencies and programs, several presidential advisory committees, regional health offices, the Office of the Surgeon General, and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. The AAMC believes that Dr. Levine's career experience as a clinician researcher and public health official, most recently serving as Pennsylvania's health secretary, provide invaluable qualifications to lead OASH. For example, the public health challenges Dr. Levine tackled in Pennsylvania – including addressing the opioid crisis, combatting infectious diseases such as

HIV and Hepatitis C, and responding to COVID-19 – show her breadth of experience and commitment to public service. Before her role as health secretary, Dr. Levine was a professor at Penn State College of Medicine while also providing clinical care at Penn State Hershey Medical Center, specializing in the treatment of adolescents and patients with eating disorders. She additionally has worked to raise awareness on gender identity issues and has advocated for equitable health care coverage, and she would serve as an important voice in efforts to address discrimination in health care.

OASH has a profound influence, both immediately and longer-term, in shaping the environment for public health and guiding the nation's response to public health emergencies. The AAMC believes that Dr. Levine's experience, leadership, public service, and dedication are ideal qualifications for the role of Assistant Secretary for Health during this critical time and in the future, and we hope that the Senate will move expeditiously to complete her confirmation.

The AAMC is grateful for your attention and the opportunity to provide these comments in support of Dr. Levine's nomination. Please contact me or AAMC Chief Public Policy Officer Karen Fisher, JD (kfisher@aamc.org) if you believe the AAMC can be of assistance or provide further information.

Sincerely,



David J. Skorton, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer
Association of American Medical Colleges

cc: Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee
Karen Fisher, JD



Association of
American Medical Colleges
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20001-2399
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February 19, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Sincerely,



David J. Skorton, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer
Association of American Medical Colleges

cc: Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee
Karen Fisher, JD

ASSOCIATION OF STATE AND TERRITORIAL HEALTH OFFICIALS



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Arlington, VA 22202
(202) 371-9090

Regional Office
600 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 1000
Atlanta, GA 30308
(202) 371-9090

www.astho.org
@ASTHO

February 17, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), I am pleased to support President Biden's nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to her nomination, Dr. Levine served as the Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and president of ASTHO. We strongly urge the Senate to promptly confirm Dr. Levine to this position.

As the Assistant Secretary for Health, Dr. Levine's leadership will prove invaluable at this pivotal moment in public health. She is a dynamic leader with extensive experience as the former president of ASTHO working with federal, state, local, and territorial public health officials throughout the country to address America's most pressing health issues. In her previous role as Secretary of Health in Pennsylvania, she made huge strides in combating the opioid epidemic, advancing LGBTQ equity, protecting rural health, and leading Pennsylvania's public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On a personal note, during Dr. Levine's tenure as a leader and president of ASTHO I witnessed first-hand Dr. Levine's steady, fair, nonpartisan commitment to improving the health of the entire population while navigating one of the most consequential moments in our nation's history. Throughout this time, Dr. Levine ensured that data, evidence, and science drove policy decisions by our organization.

Throughout her career, Dr. Levine has led with a discerning blend of urgency, expertise, and compassion. It is therefore, without hesitation, that ASTHO fully supports her nomination to the position of Assistant Secretary for Health. ASTHO looks forward to working with the Senate throughout the confirmation process. If you require additional information or have any questions please contact Carolyn Mullen, senior vice president of government affairs & public relations at cmullen@astho.org.

Sincerely,

Michael Fraser, PhD, MS, CAE, FCPP
Chief Executive Officer, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

CC: Nirav Shah, ASTHO President & Director, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention



February 19, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray

Chairwoman

United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

The Honorable Richard Burr

Ranking Member

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC), I write to express our strong support for Dr. Rachel Levine's nomination as Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH) for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. BCHC is a forum for the leaders of America's largest metropolitan health departments to exchange strategies and jointly address issues to promote and protect the health and safety of the 62 million, or one-in-five, people our members serve.

In the midst of the worldwide COVID pandemic, a comprehensive response with the full force of the federal government, from the White House, to the Cabinet, to HHS and all of its subagencies, is needed. In particular, it is incredibly important to have persons with extensive public health practice experience in positions of policy-making, such as the role of the ASH. With a wealth of public health practice experience, including an understanding of state and local public health functions and needs, and a dedication to health equity, Dr. Levine is ideal for this position. Such leadership at the federal level is vital to the COVID-19 response and recovery, as well as a highly functioning public health system post-pandemic.

Just prior to being nominated, Dr. Levine served as Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, leading the response through the first 10 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. She acted decisively to protect the health and well-being of the people of Pennsylvania. In the face of immense pressure, Dr. Levine's unwavering leadership has been a model for the field. Her experience and knowledge will prove critical as the federal government implements the national response plan, manages vaccine distribution, and, ultimately, rebuilds and recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In her time as the Pennsylvania Health Secretary, Dr. Levine also focused resources on the opioid epidemic and implemented a multi-pronged approach to reduce death and increase evidence-based treatment. Substance Use Disorder is, of course, an ongoing challenge the country faces, that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. And, at a time of growing income and health inequity, Dr. Levine will approach policy decisions with this in mind, and work to protect and promote the health of most vulnerable among us, not just a select few.

7501 WISCONSIN AVENUE, SUITE 1310E, BETHESDA, MD 20814 // WWW.BIGCITIESHEALTH.ORG

Dr. Levine's extensive experience, knowledge, and leadership in public health practice make her a truly qualified candidate to be the Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. As the primary advisor on matters involving the nation's public health, we look forward to working with her and urge the Senate to confirm Dr. Levine as quickly as possible.

We thank you both for your continued leadership in strengthening the nation's public health system. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at either juliano@bigcitieshealth.org or 202-557-6507 for further information as you move forward Dr. Levine's nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chrissie Juliano".

Chrissie Juliano, MPP
Executive Director
Big Cities Health Coalition



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman, Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, Chairwoman Murray, and Ranking Member Burr:

The Center for American Progress, an independent nonpartisan research institute dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through bold, progressive ideas, writes to express its strong support for confirming Dr. Rachel Levine for Assistant Secretary of Health (ASH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We applaud Dr. Levine's many years of experience as a public health leader and health policy expert dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of all Americans.

As Secretary of Health for Pennsylvania, the 6th most populous state in the country, Dr. Levine has worked to strategically combat the COVID-19 pandemic and regularly collaborates with the current ASH office to coordinate federal and state policies in response to the pandemic and a myriad of other issues. Her election as President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials is evidence of her leadership and the respect she has garnered among other public health experts. Moreover, during her tenure as Physician General of Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine advanced a health policy agenda to combat the opioid epidemic, improve quality of and access to mental health and substance use disorder care and treatment, and build a more fair and equitable health care and health insurance system. In addition to her work as a dedicated public servant, Dr. Levine also offers academic expertise, serving as Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Penn State College of Medicine, and as a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, and the Academy for Eating Disorders.

Now more than ever, Dr. Levine's leadership and expertise is needed to help the country respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created unprecedented challenges for our public health and health care infrastructure, increased barriers to care, and exacerbated existing health disparities.

As the federal government continues to collaborate with states to administer tests and vaccines while also working to address the detrimental impacts of this public health crisis – particularly for women, communities of color and low-income households – the role of ASH will be vital. As ASH of HHS, Dr. Levine would have the opportunity to lend her expertise to ensure effective and efficient agency management and delivery of services, while advancing a meaningful and impactful health policy agenda that meets the needs of all Americans. At this crucial juncture, it is imperative that the office of ASH be helmed by a leader with a proven track record of success; direct experience improving our nation’s health care system and managing large public health agencies; and a deep understanding of our health care system and the importance of equitable access to care, particularly for our most vulnerable and marginalized communities. We believe that Dr. Rachel Levine is that individual.

In addition to her clear qualifications and merits, if confirmed Dr. Levine would be the first openly transgender person confirmed by the Senate as a federal official, making her confirmation historic.

We urge the Committee and the Senate to swiftly confirm Dr. Levine.

Sincerely,

Center for American Progress



February 19, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Burr,

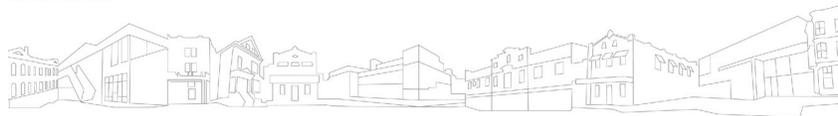
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers is writing to encourage the appointment of Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine, to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH).

Founded in 1994 as a member-based coalition to support the development of strong, sustainable LGBTQ community centers, a fundamental goal of CenterLink's work is to help build the capacity of these centers to address the social, cultural, health, and political advocacy needs of LGBTQ community members across the country. CenterLink plays a vital role in addressing the challenges centers face by helping them to improve their organizational and service delivery capacity, access public resources, and engage their regional communities in grassroots social justice movements.

CenterLink strongly believes that Dr. Levine is an experienced public health leader who is well-prepared for this important role. As Secretary of Health for the 6th most populous state in the country, Dr. Levine routinely works with the Assistant Secretary of Health's office to build critical connections between state and federal policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her connections and knowledge will be invaluable when forming close alliances between federal and state health agencies going forward.

Dr. Levine is President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO). She formerly served as Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center. Dr. Levine has published and lectured widely on the opioid crisis, adolescent medicine, eating disorders, and LGBT medicine. Dr. Levine is also a member of the LGBTQI+ community and the highest level openly transgender public health professional in U.S. history.

P O Box 24490
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307-4490
954.765.6024; Fax 954.765.6593
www.lgbtcenters.org





Dr. Levine has served as both physician general and secretary of health for Pennsylvania where she managed the state's response to both the opioid epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic. She is deeply respected and trusted by public health leaders across the country. Her nomination to serve as Assistant Secretary of Health has been supported by major public health organizations including the American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, American Psychiatric Association, and more.

We are confident that Dr. Levine is the best possible candidate to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health in this time of extraordinary demands on our public health system. We strongly urge you to confirm this appointment as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Denise Spivak
CEO
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers

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954.765.6024; Fax 954.765.6593
www.lgbtcenters.org





444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 339
 Washington, DC 20001
 (202) 434.8090 | NASTAD.org

February 22, 2021

Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 United States Senate
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of NASTAD (National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors), a leading non-partisan non-profit association that represents governmental public health officials who administer HIV and hepatitis programs in the U.S., I would like to offer our organization's support for Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Based on our experience with her and her exceptional qualifications of leadership, expertise, and vision, NASTAD believes Dr. Levine is an excellent candidate for this important role.

Dr. Levine is an accomplished pediatrician who currently serves as the Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Penn State College of Medicine, and as president of ASTHO, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. In her various roles, she has led Pennsylvania's public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic; spearheaded efforts to end the opioid epidemic; and advocated on behalf of the LGBTQ community. With this nomination, Dr. Levine would become the first openly transgender federal official to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

With a diverse career in public health and medicine, Dr. Levine brings expertise on numerous aspects of health including LGBTQ+ medicine, adolescent medicine, and eating disorders. Dr. Levine's experience as a physician and a public health leader will be crucial to combating both COVID-19 and the intersecting HIV, viral hepatitis, and related epidemics.

Dr. Levine is uniquely suited to serve as our next Assistant Secretary of Health at the Department of Health and Human

Officers

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Meredith Brantley, Tennessee

Executive Director

Stephen Lee (ex officio)

Services and to fulfill the vision President Biden has put forth for public health. Her medical experience, as well as the numerous years of experience she has in public and community health make Dr. Levine an asset to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Stephen Lee MD, MBA, DHSM
Executive Director
NASTAD



Champions Circle
REDC Consortium

Executive Circle

Clementine,
Monte Nido
Oliver-Pyatt Centers
Eating Recovery Center
The Emily Program
SunCloud Health
Veritas Collaborative
WithAll

Policy Circle

Academy for Eating Disorders
National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)
The Renfrew Center

Leadership Circle

Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness
Bannister Consultancy
The Donahue Foundation
Gail R. Schoenbach FREED Foundation
International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals (IAEDP)
Montecastelli

Advocacy Circle

Center for Change
Laureate Eating Disorders Program
Walden Behavioral Care

Support Circle

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Alsana: Eating Disorders Treatment and Recovery Centers
Cambridge Eating Disorder Center
Center for Discovery
Eating Disorder Hope
Farrington Specialty Centers
Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association
Park Nicollet Melrose Center
Rosewood Centers for Eating Disorders
Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders (STRIPED)
Stay Strong Virginia

Hope Circle

Eating Disorder Coalition of Iowa (EDCI)
Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders (F.E.A.S.T.)
International Federation of Eating Disorders Dietitians (IFEDD)
Moonshadow's Spirit
The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Eating Disorders
Rogers Behavioral Health
Wrobel & Smith, PLLP

Senator Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Dr. Rachel Levine's Nomination for Assistant Secretary for Health

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) would like to express its full support of Dr. Rachel Levine's nomination as Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The EDC is a nonprofit organization comprised of patient and caregiver advocates, treatment providers, advocacy organizations, and academics, aimed to advance the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the U.S. By promoting federal support for improved access to care, the EDC seeks to increase the resources available for education, prevention, and improved training, as well as for scientific research on the etiology, prevention, and treatment of eating disorders.

Dr. Rachel Levine has a long and distinguished career in the field of public health; her work has been expansive and touched many areas of healthcare, including eating disorders issues. Prior to her most recent role as Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine founded the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders at Penn State Children's Hospital at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, where she served as Chief of the Division from 2005-2015 and led the care of adolescents facing a range of different medical and mental health issues. She also served as the Director of the Eating Disorders Program at the same institution from 2003-2015, where she helped oversee interdisciplinary outpatient programs, intensive outpatient programs, and partial hospitalization programs for children and young adolescents, as well as programs for older adolescents and adults. Dr. Levine has also lectured internationally on adolescent eating disorders and contributed to a substantial number of scientific papers on eating disorders issues including, "A National Survey of Eating Disorder Training," in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, a paper the EDC often references when discussing the lack of standard eating disorder training for doctors.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, she helped establish the COVID-19 Department Operations Center, rapidly expanded testing, and organized the distribution of N-95 masks and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), all while promoting health equity to protect vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. Dr. Deborah Birx, formerly of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, stated she would give Pennsylvania an A-minus for their efforts led by Dr. Levine, only because she does not give out solid As. In addition to her work on the pandemic, Dr. Levine also led innovative efforts to address the opioid crisis and expand the capabilities of the state's Bureaus of Epidemiology and Laboratories.

PO Box 96503-98807 ■ Washington, D.C. 20090
202-543-9570

www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org



Champions Circle
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Executive Circle

Clementine,
Monte Nido
Oliver-Pyatt Centers
Eating Recovery Center
The Emily Program
SunCloud Health
Veritas Collaborative
WithAll

Policy Circle

Academy for Eating Disorders
National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)
The Renfrew Center

Leadership Circle

Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness
Bannister Consultancy
The Donahue Foundation
Gail R. Schoenbach FREED Foundation
International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals)
Montecatini

Advocacy Circle

Center for Change
Laureate Eating Disorders Program
Walden Behavioral Care

Support Circle

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Alsana: Eating Disorders Treatment and Recovery Centers
Cambridge Eating Disorder Center
Center for Discovery
Eating Disorder Hope
Farrington Specialty Centers
Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association
Park Nicollet Melrose Center
Rosewood Centers for Eating Disorders
Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders (STRIPED)
Stay Strong Virginia

Hope Circle

Eating Disorder Coalition of Iowa (EDCI)
Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders (F.E.A.S.T.)
International Federation of Eating Disorders Dietitians (IFEDD)
Moonshadow's Spirit
The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Eating Disorders
Rogers Behavioral Health
Wrobel & Smith, PLLP

Additionally, Dr. Levine has also proven her leadership abilities and public health knowledge in her other roles, including as Physician General for Pennsylvania, Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine, and most recently when she became the President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials in 2020. In these roles, she continues to serve the healthcare needs of all people and bring attention to the needs of underserved populations including the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities.

In addition to her strong professional and academic records, Dr. Levine has established a reputation as a leader who leads with honesty, compassion, and integrity. The EDC expresses its endorsement for Dr. Levine's confirmation as Assistant Secretary for Health.

Sincerely,

Chase Bannister, MDIV, MSW, LCSW, CEDS
President, Board of Directors
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

PO Box 96503-98807 ■ Washington, D.C. 20090
202-543-9570
www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org



February 18, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Burr:

On behalf of the Endocrine Society, I am writing today to express our support for the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine for the position of Assistant Secretary of Health (ASH).

The Endocrine Society is the world's oldest, largest, and most active organization dedicated to the understanding of hormone systems and the clinical care of patients with endocrine disorders and diseases. Our membership of over 18,000 physicians and researchers who are experts in diabetes, thyroid, menopause, reproduction, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, osteoporosis, obesity, and other hormone health topics. As such we are deeply committed to accelerating scientific breakthroughs to improve health and addressing the difficult and pressing health policy decisions.

Dr. Levine's background makes her deeply qualified and uniquely suited to help lead the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) at this critical time. A graduate of Harvard University and Tulane Medical School, Dr. Levine is an accomplished pediatrician who was appointed in 2015 by Governor Tom Wolf as Pennsylvania's physician general, the state's top doctor. Impressed with her background in behavioral and mental health, the state Senate voted unanimously to approve her. In 2017 she was named Acting Secretary of Health and confirmed as Pennsylvania's health secretary. Her efforts to contain the coronavirus; fight and prevent diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis C, and diabetes; reduce health disparities, end the opioid epidemic; and support the LGBTQ community reflect her knowledge, and expertise to lead public health efforts and successfully work with key health offices and programs across HHS, local and state health departments, and multiple physician, researcher, and patient groups.

The Endocrine Society has had the opportunity to work with Dr. Levine on several key initiatives and witness her intelligence, commitment to public health, and effective leadership. She spoke at our annual meeting in 2017 during a plenary about transgender health, research, and taught many of our members about important physician and patient considerations; she presented at a educational briefing we conducted for congressional offices about transgender health and provided valuable information about access to care; and she provided feedback on a pilot quality improvement study we conducted in Pennsylvania to reduce the incidence and severity of hypoglycemia in older patients with type 2 diabetes.

Dr. Levine's dynamic and innovative leadership will prove invaluable during this critical time in public health as our nation battles not only the pandemic but other serious health crises, including the growing epidemics of diabetes drug addiction and inequities in health care. We know Dr. Levine will be able to take huge strides to protect our nation's health.

2055 L Street NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC
20036
T. 202.971.3636
F. 202.736.9705
endocrine.org



We urge you to support the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine so that the full Senate will be able to swiftly confirm her to the position of HHS Assistant Secretary of Health. If we can be of any further assistance, please contact Mila Becker, Chief Policy Officer at mbecker@endocrine.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary D. Hammer".

Gary D. Hammer, MD, PhD
President, Endocrine Society

cc Senator Charles Schumer, Majority Leader
Senator Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader



February 21, 2021

To Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Family Planning Councils of America (FPCA) in enthusiastic support of the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine to the position of Assistant Secretary of Health (ASH) in the Department of Health and Human Services.

FPCA is a trade association of private, not-for-profit, Title X funded grantee organizations invested in strengthening the national family planning program and devoted to keeping Title X a national priority. FPCA utilizes the service delivery expertise of its members to promote excellence in the development, operation and evaluation of community-based systems of reproductive health care. Serving as a forum for the exchange of information and exploration of issues of concern, FPCA advocates for the provision of high-quality services; supports effective and efficient management practices; and advises on program and policy development resulting in improved health status of clients and communities.

Dr. Levine has impeccable credentials for this role. While her academic and medical training are impressive, having studied and/or trained at Harvard College, Tulane University School of Medicine, and Mt. Sinai, it is her track record in medical practice and in her public health posts that excite us as public health professionals most, and warrant her swift confirmation.

Dr. Levine brings to the Assistant Secretary of Health (ASH) role a valuable combination of clinical (as a practicing pediatrician), academic (as a professor and lecturer), and public health experience (as Pennsylvania's Physician General for two years, and then Secretary of Health). Importantly, given the unique and intense health challenges facing the Biden Administration and our nation, Dr. Levine also brings to the ASH role entrepreneurial, innovative thinking. She founded the Penn State Hershey Eating Disorder Program; led Pennsylvania's opioid response at a time of true crisis, taking the bold step of authorizing pharmacies to dispense life-saving naloxone to anyone requesting it; and provided much needed steady, caring leadership to Pennsylvanians throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Levine's areas of focus and concern align closely with ours as family planning organizations. She has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to adolescent care, including sexual and reproductive health care, care for eating disorders, and care for the rights and needs of LGBTQAI youth. She is knowledgeable in, and committed to, maternal and child health, and has a fundamental commitment to integrated care, with a focus on the connection between mental and physical health. She recognizes the critical need for health equity and inclusion in public health. And she sees sexual and reproductive health as basic components of overall health and wellbeing.

Our members from Pennsylvania who have had the honor of working directly with Dr. Levine have found her to be an accessible leader who has treated them as partners in achieving public health goals. Dr.

Levine keynoted an annual conference for our member AccessMatters, speaking on the topic of adolescent health. Another member, Maternal and Family Health Services, awarded Dr. Levine its Outstanding Public Service Award in recognition of her work as an advocate for the health of teens and children throughout Pennsylvania, as well as for the LGBTQAI community.

With her strong public health background and lifetime of service, Dr. Levine is highly qualified and prepared for the ASH role. In addition, she would be the first transgender person to be confirmed by the US Senate - a trailblazing role with which she is familiar and for which she is equipped, and further evidence of the commitment of the Biden Administration to ensuring all voices and communities are represented in the nation's highest positions.

As grantees of our nation's critical safety net family planning program, we heartily support the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine as ASH, confident in our belief that she will be a careful steward of, and champion for, the Title X program we hold dear. We urge her swift confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Brenda L. Thomas".

Brenda L. "Bré" Thomas
President

FENWAY  HEALTH

February 23, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Elizabeth.Letter@help.senate.gov.

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Fenway Health, a federally qualified health center and HIV clinic in Boston, we write to urge you to confirm the appointment of Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine, to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH).

Dr. Levine is eminently qualified to serve as ASH. She is currently Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, and the Academy for Eating Disorders. Dr. Levine is President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO). She formerly served as Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center. Dr. Levine has published and lectured widely on the opioid crisis, adolescent medicine, eating disorders, and LGBT medicine. Dr. Levine is also a member of the LGBTQI+ community and the highest level openly transgender public health professional in U.S. history.

As Secretary of Health for the sixth most populous state in the country, Dr. Levine routinely works with the Assistant Secretary of Health's office to build critical bridges between federal and state policies on the pandemic and more. Her election as current President of ASTHO is a clear testament to the level of faith other public health leaders have in her leadership. To have a former state Secretary of Health in the ASH position in the coming months, when there is an urgent need for closer alliance between federal and state pandemic policies, will be invaluable.

We are confident that Dr. Levine is the best possible candidate to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health in this time of extraordinary demands on our public health system. We strongly urge you to confirm this appointment with all deliberate speed.

Sincerely,

Ellen LaPointe
CEO

Carl Sciortino
Executive Vice President

Sean Cahill, PhD
Director, Health Policy Research

Carrie Richgels
Manager of Policy and Advocacy

Cc: Senator Warren
Senator Markey
Congresswoman Pressley



Karen Murphy, PhD, RN
Executive Vice President
Chief Innovation Officer
Founding Director of the Steele Institute for Health Innovation
Geisinger
100 N. Academy Avenue
Danville, PA 17822
570-271-7091
kmurphy2@geisinger.edu

February 18, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Burr,

This letter serves as my recommendation for Dr. Rachel Levine in consideration of her nomination as Assistant Secretary of Health.

I initially met Dr. Levine when we joined Governor Tom Wolf's cabinet in 2015. Dr. Levine was appointed Physician General and I served as Secretary of Health. For the next two years, I worked closely with Dr. Levine on a wide variety of issues and challenges facing the Department of Health. During that time, I found Dr. Levine to be a brilliant physician as well as a dedicated public servant. I consistently found her to be well informed and valued her counsel.

During my time working with Dr. Levine, she embraced the challenges of the opioid addiction crisis in Pennsylvania. She worked tirelessly to decrease the number of overdose deaths in the state. Dr. Levine signed a statewide physicians order for Naloxone that allowed all Pennsylvanians to have access to the life-saving drug. She was successful in development of new strategies for treatment of opioid addiction. She always worked collaboratively across all agencies of federal and state government. Dr. Levine was/is highly regarded by her colleagues and Department of Health staff.

Dr. Levine was appointed Secretary of Health when I left the role in June 2017. She continued to be an exemplary leader on important health issues facing Pennsylvanians. Dr. Levine demonstrated concern for the most vulnerable populations. For example, Dr. Levine led the PA Rural Health Model in partnership with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation. The PA Rural Health Model is an innovative payment model designed to provide stability and access to health care in rural communities across Pennsylvania. Dr. Levine continued her work on opioid addiction and behavioral health. She worked on important regulatory and legislation to improve the health of all Pennsylvanians.

Over the past year, Pennsylvanians were fortunate to have Dr. Levine lead the state's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Levine demonstrated extraordinary leadership. She effectively communicated critical information to Pennsylvanians by hosting a daily press briefing. Dr. Levine worked collaboratively with health systems to secure testing, personal protective equipment (PPE) and launched a statewide vaccine program. Her unwavering dedication to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania was abundantly clear.

I am grateful that I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Levine. I wholeheartedly endorse her nomination as Assistant Secretary of Health. There is no doubt that Dr. Levine will do great work at HHS.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,



Karen M. Murphy, PhD, RN
Executive Vice President
Chief Innovation Officer
Founding Director of the Steele Institute for Health Innovation
Geisinger



February 19, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
 The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 United States Senate
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr and Distinguished HELP Committee Members:

On behalf of GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality (GLMA) and our LGBTQ health professional members nationwide, we enthusiastically and without reservation endorse the nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health in the US Department of Health and Human Services. We urge members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) to support her nomination and call for swift confirmation by the full Senate.

Dr. Levine's exemplary record of public service make her uniquely and eminently qualified to take on the public health portfolio that falls under the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health. As you know, as the Assistant Secretary for Health, she would be responsible for protecting the entire nation's public health at one of the most challenging moments the nation has faced with regard to health and well-being.

Dr. Levine has already proven herself ready and prepared to take on these challenges. Her expertise and experiences leading Pennsylvania's response to the COVID-19 pandemic as the commonwealth's Secretary of Health will be invaluable as she tackles the formidable public health crises affecting our nation. Dr. Levine will bring the same qualities to this work nationally that have served her well throughout her public service career, including reliance on scientific and medical evidence and commitment to equity and inclusion to develop and implement policies and programs that advance health and well-being for all.

As you may be aware, GLMA is itself an organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) healthcare providers and our allies dedicated to advancing health equity for the LGBTQ community. Throughout her career, Dr. Levine has worked to improve healthcare access for LGBTQ people and has spoken eloquently about diversity in the health professions, core parts of GLMA's mission. In 2017, GLMA bestowed upon her our highest honor, the GLMA Achievement Award, in recognition of her exemplary work.

GLMA members, and indeed the entire 825,000+ strong LGBTQ healthcare workforce, look to Dr. Levine as a role model and a trailblazer among LGBTQ health professionals and all public servants. Her confirmation will send a strong message not only about valuing diversity and inclusion but also about the rewards of hard work, perseverance and public service.

In conclusion, GLMA strongly supports Dr. Levine's confirmation as Assistant Secretary for Health and respectfully requests the Committee and its members to do the same.

Sincerely,



Scott Nass, MD, MPA
GLMA President



Hector Vargas, JD
GLMA Executive Director



February 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the nation's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) equality, we write to support the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). To successfully serve as assistant health secretary, a nominee must have an exceptional understanding of health and policy in addition to an analytic, thoughtful temperament. Dr. Levine's professional record and public presence demonstrate her ability to serve with distinction.

Throughout her career, Dr. Levine has consistently dedicated herself to enhancing the health and well-being of the public. She brings valuable expertise that is critical to the federal government's response to COVID-19. Prior to her time as Secretary of Health in Pennsylvania where she led the response against the COVID-19 pandemic, she served as Physician General in 2015. In addition to her time in government, Dr. Levine was a long-time pediatrician at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and a professor at Penn State College of Medicine.

The department performs the critical function of providing effective health and human services for all members of the public through various programs. At a time when access to health care is a growing crisis, Dr. Levine has the empathy to understand the health needs of our diverse country and the skillset to improve outcomes. As the first transgender person nominated to a Senate confirmed position, Dr. Levine also brings needed diversity to the federal government. Now transgender people will finally see themselves reflected in the make-up of our government's most important positions.

We strongly urge you to vote in favor of this historic nomination to the HHS. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact HRC Government Affairs Director David Stacy at David.Stacy@hrc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AD', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alphonso David

President
Human Rights Campaign
1640 Rhode Island Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-3278
(202) 628-4160
<https://www.hrc.org/>



1415 California St.
Houston, TX 77006

T (832) 548 5100
F (832) 548 5092

LegacyCommunityHealth.org

February 19, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: In support of Dr. Rachel Levine as Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services

Chairwoman Murray and Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in regards to Health and Human Services Appointee, Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine. As the Chief Executive Officer at Legacy Community Health, the largest Community Health Center system in Texas, I am honored to support President Biden's appointment of Dr. Levine.

In the President's recent address to the National Institutes of Health, the President stated "we're in a national emergency. And this will be one of the most difficult operational challenges we have ever undertaken as a nation." At Legacy we serve over 130,000 community members a year, and as such we know just how dire the situation is. We have seen this pandemic unfold first-hand, and we know how it has heavily impacted vulnerable populations in our state.

As Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine has seen the challenges states are facing in addressing this pandemic as she has routinely worked with the Assistant Secretary of Health's office to build critical bridges between federal and state policies on the pandemic and more. To add to this, her election as President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) is a testament to the level of faith and accountability other public health leaders across the country have in Dr. Levine's leadership. We too are confident in Dr. Levine's awareness of the issues impacting Texans, and believe she is more than qualified to bridge the divide between state and federal policies.

Dr. Levine is a historic and deeply qualified choice for the Department of Health and Human Services. We are confident in her proven leadership and believe she is the best possible candidate to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health in this unprecedented moment. We strongly urge you to support Dr. Levine's confirmation. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Katy Caldwell
Chief Executive Officer



February 19, 2021

President
Cassandra Price
Georgia

Senator Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard Burr
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

First Vice President
Arlene González-Sánchez
New York

*Vice President
for Internal Affairs*
Rosie Andueza
Idaho

*Vice President
for Treatment*
Linda Mahoney
Rhode Island

*Vice President
for Prevention*
Sarah Mariani
Washington

*Immediate
Past President*
Mark Stringer
Missouri

Secretary
Jennifer Smith
Pennsylvania

Treasurer
Doug Thomas
Utah

Regional Directors

Cindy Seivwright, VT

Region I

Valerie Mielke, NJ

Region II

Jennifer Smith, PA

Region III

Kody Kinsley, NC

Region IV

Lori Criss, OH

Region V

Kirk Lane, AR

Region VI

Shari Dawson, NE

Region VII

Doug Thomas, UT

Region VIII

Eddie Mersereau, HI

Region IX

Michael Langer, WA

Region X

Executive Director
Robert L. L. Morrison

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD), I am writing in support of the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine as the Assistant Secretary for Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We believe that Dr. Levine has the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to oversee the Department's key public health offices and programs.

Dr. Levine most recently served as the Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and has served as President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO). Dr. Levine is also a Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Pennsylvania State College of Medicine.

Dr. Levine graduated from Harvard College and earned her medical degree from the Tulane University School of Medicine. She completed her fellowship in Adolescent Medicine at Mt. Sinai, then practiced pediatrics and adolescent medicine in New York while serving on faculty of the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine.

She then became the director of Ambulatory Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at the Polyclinic Medical Center in Pennsylvania. In 1996, she joined the staff at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center as the director of Pediatric Ambulatory Services and Adolescent Medicine. She also served as vice chair for clinical affairs for the Department of Pediatrics and chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders at the Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital-Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

As Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine worked with other State agencies, including the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, led by Secretary Jennifer Smith, to address the opioid crisis. This work included the establishment of opioid prescribing guidelines, a statewide naloxone standing order prescription, training for medical students, and promoting the benefits of substance use disorder services. She has also helped improve health equity in her role as Secretary of Health, especially for the LGBTQ population.

With over three decades of experience as a clinician, teacher, and public health leader, we strongly support the confirmation of Dr. Levine to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Health. We look forward to working with you as the nomination process moves forward.

Robert Morrison
Executive Director
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)



The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chair
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
 Pensions
 United States Senate
 154 Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
 Pensions
 United States Senate
 217 Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Feb. 22, 2021

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of more than 7,000 chronic disease prevention and control professionals in every US state and territory, I am writing to support the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine as the Assistant Secretary for Health. As an affiliate organization of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, we have valued Dr. Levine's leadership as ASTHO's Board President.

We are proud to share our support for Dr. Rachel Levine, whose experience as the Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gives her important insight into the critical role of State Health Departments as well as the challenges they face. Her contributions to combating the opioid epidemic, advancing LGBTQ equity, protecting rural health, and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic will make her a crucial asset to HHS.

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) was founded in 1988 in partnership with CDC to help build the capacity and effectiveness of state health departments to reduce the burden of chronic disease in our nation. NACDD is the primary organization representing all state and jurisdictional chronic disease staff, dedicated to building capacity and making public health good for the public.

Headquartered in Atlanta, we have more than 100 projects currently underway translating national programs and policies down to the grassroots. (*For examples of our most recent achievements, please see our NACDD At a Glance enclosure.*)

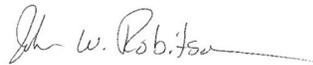
We offer many services to help facilitate efficient and impactful investment of federal and private funds for chronic disease prevention, control, and health promotion, including:

- Professional development and workforce training opportunities.
- Program evaluation assistance, including needs assessment, design and planning, database development, and quantitative and qualitative analysis.
- A robust online community at chronicdisease.org, complete with success stories as well as public health and leadership best practices libraries.
- An authoritative voice for chronic disease prevention and health promotion in local and national dialogues.



We look forward to an opportunity to meet with you to share more details on our work and opportunities for further collaboration.

In Good Health,



John W. Robitscher, M.P.H.
Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

February 21, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Senator Burr,

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the nearly 3,000 local health departments that we represent, I write to express our strong support for the nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, to be the next Assistant Secretary of Health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Her extensive qualifications and strong grounding in governmental public health make her an excellent choice for the role, especially as we continue to respond to the largest public health challenge in more than 100 years.

An accomplished physician and academic medical researcher, Dr. Levine has a firm rounding in the many challenges faced by both individuals and the health care system as a whole. However, as we enter a second year of addressing COVID-19, it is her strong familiarity with and commitment to public health that makes her such a valuable asset to HHS. No matter what stage of the pandemic, governmental public health has led the way and that perspective is critical for the Department as they work to improve our nation's response to the virus. As the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, she saw firsthand the unique role that governmental public health plays and the importance of collaboration and coordination across all governmental sectors to make the changes needed to improve health and wellbeing. As a former President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, she has collaborated with NACCHO leaders as part of our Joint Council and understands the importance of, and how to activate, strong partnerships across the local-state-federal public health enterprise.

Dr. Levine is also a great communicator and skilled expert. She has a strong understanding of the areas of health and wellbeing that have been impacted by the current global pandemic, as well as the many other public health challenges that do not make the headlines. She has written extensively on numerous health issues, including the opioid crisis, eating disorders, and LGBTQ medicine and, if confirmed, would bring a unique and needed perspective to the federal government as the first openly transgender federal official confirmed by the Senate.

We are so pleased to see a strong public health practitioner nominated for this important post. Her commitment to the local and state public health partnership is clear and, if confirmed, will be an incredible asset at the federal level. We urge swift consideration and confirmation by the Senate. If you have any questions, please contact Adriane Casalotti, NACCHO's Chief of Government and Public Affairs, at acasalotti@naccho.org.

Sincerely,



Lori Tremmel Freeman, MBA
Chief Executive Officer



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

National
Family Planning
& Reproductive Health Association

February 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

I am writing on behalf of the National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association in strong support of the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine to the position of Assistant Secretary of Health (ASH) at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS).

The National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA) is a non-partisan, nonprofit membership association whose mission is to advance and elevate the importance of family planning in the nation's health care system and promotes and supports the work of family planning providers and administrators, especially in the safety net. NFPRHA membership includes more than 1,000 members that operate or fund more than 3,500 health centers that deliver high-quality family planning education and preventive care to millions of people every year in the United States. NFPRHA represents the broad spectrum of publicly funded family planning providers including, state and local health departments, hospitals, family planning councils, federally qualified health centers, Planned Parenthood affiliates, and other private non-profit agencies. As a leading expert in publicly funded family planning, NFPRHA conducts and participates in research; provides educational subject matter expertise to policymakers, health care providers, and the public; and offers its members capacity-building support aimed at maximizing their effectiveness and financial sustainability as providers of essential health care.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health oversees key public health offices at HHS, including the Office of Population Affairs (OPA). OPA administers the Title X family planning program, the only dedicated source of federal funding for family planning. Since its inception, Title X has been a bedrock, cost-effective health care program helping ensure that individuals with low

or no incomes have access to critical family planning care, including contraception, pelvic exams, sexually transmitted disease testing and treatment, and screening for breast and cervical cancer. However, the 2019 Trump Title X rule has had a devastating impact on the family planning safety net and hamstrung the entire network of family planning providers and administrators that rely on Title X for critical program funding. The Title X program desperately needs committed leadership dedicated to rebuilding and recovering from the harm of the Trump rule, and Dr. Levine is eminently qualified to help lead that work.

As a practicing pediatrician, professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at Penn State College of Medicine, and most recently as the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, Dr. Levine has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to public health, including sexual and reproductive health. She has a proven dedication to adolescent health, LGBTQ+ health, health equity and inclusion, and maternal and child health, all critical components of the programs and offices under the ASH's purview, including Title X. With CA Attorney General Xavier Becerra at the helm and Dr. Levine as ASH, HHS will have the leadership it needs to undo the extensive harm inflicted by the actions of the previous administration and refocus the Department on building and supporting an equitable and accessible health care system designed to improve health outcomes for all.

NFPRHA urges the Committee and the Senate to swiftly confirm Dr. Levine's nomination as Assistant Secretary of Health.

Sincerely,



Clare Coleman
President & CEO

National Council of Jewish Women
2055 L St NW Suite 650
Washington, DC 20036

T: 202. 296. 2588



National Council of Jewish Women

February 22, 2021

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
US Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the 180,000 advocates of National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), we write to express our strong support for the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health within the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As a national grassroots organization fighting for social justice on behalf of women, children, and families, we know that Dr. Levine would be a champion for essential health care access and coverage for all people at a time when we need it most.

Due to her extraordinary expertise and demonstrated record as a public health leader, Dr. Levine is the best possible candidate to help lead HHS in this critical moment and beyond. As Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, she has led coronavirus response and relief efforts for our nation's sixth most populous state. In this capacity, Dr. Levine has educated Pennsylvanians about public health measures necessary to combat COVID-19 and routinely worked with the Assistant Secretary for Health's office to build bridges between federal and state policies on the pandemic and more. What's more, in her previous position as Pennsylvania Physician General, Dr. Levine tackled another public health crisis — the opioid epidemic — by developing initiatives to help those impacted seek treatment and recovery and by ensuring that overdose-reversing medication was more accessible and available without a prescription. This experience will prove truly invaluable as HHS continues to navigate the ongoing, once-in-a-century pandemic.

Over the course of her career, Dr. Levine has also advocated for LGBTQ equality and inclusion on behalf of and as a member of this community. Unfortunately, LGBTQ people experience high rates of harassment and outright discrimination in health care settings, often leading them to delay or refrain from seeking necessary services or to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity. Lack of access to comprehensive health insurance and to culturally-competent care and providers further exacerbate public health disparities faced by the LGBTQ community. As the highest level openly transgender public health professional in US history, Dr. Levine's lived experience will bring unique insight as HHS works to fulfill its mission "to enhance the health and well-being of all Americans" (emphasis added).

As Jews, we believe in the ultimate moral imperative to protect every single person's health, the obligation to care for our bodies and to ensure others can do the same through access to high quality, comprehensive, and nondiscriminatory care. We are committed to compassion and dignity for all and strive to achieve equity and justice for the most marginalized members of our society. **Dr. Rachel Levine shares these values and NCJW urges her swift confirmation as Assistant Secretary for Health.**

Please reach out to Shannon Russell, NCJW Legislative Counsel, at srussell@nciw.org with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

Jody Rabhan
Chief Policy Officer
National Council of Jewish Women

Linda Brosgol
Presidium & Vice President of Community Service
National Council of Jewish Women, Philadelphia Section

Elizabeth Downing
Presidium & Vice President of Advocacy
National Council of Jewish Women, Philadelphia Section

Charlene Kurland
Presidium & Vice President of Programs/Education
National Council of Jewish Women, Philadelphia Section

Ellen Mirbach
Presidium & Vice President of Membership
National Council of Jewish Women, Philadelphia Section

Ann Pollock
Presidium & Vice President of Fundraising
National Council of Jewish Women, Philadelphia Section

Teddi Horvitz
President
National Council of Jewish Women, Pittsburgh Section





National Eating Disorders Association
1500 Broadway, Suite 1101
New York, NY 10036
TEL: 212-575-6200
NationalEatingDisorders.org

Letter of Support for Rachel Levine, M.D.'s Nomination as
Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services

We write to express our support for Rachel Levine M.D.'s appointment to Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services. The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) has seen the impact Dr. Levine has made throughout her career helping people, as a clinical provider, in teaching and at the PA Department of Health as Physician General and Secretary. We know that if fortunate enough to be confirmed, Dr. Levine would be honored to continue her work to improve the health and well-being of all Americans. Dr. Levine is committed to advancing health equity to ensure all Americans can live a healthy and full life. Dr. Levine's experience in academic medicine and her work as a state health official have prepared her for this role and she is ready.

Dr. Levine has been a champion for the eating disorders field for many years. As an active participant in proclamations for National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, and supporting legislation to further eating disorder treatment, the National Eating Disorders Association has personally seen Dr. Levine's passion for prioritizing mental health and raising awareness.

Dr. Levine has focused her career on issues at the intersection of physician health and mental health, including her work on eating disorders, substance use disorder and combating the opioid crisis. Eating disorders are serious conditions that are potentially life-threatening and have a great impact on both a person's physical and emotional health. Eating Disorders have the second highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness, second only to opioid use disorder. In the United States, 20 million women and 10 million men suffer from clinically significant eating disorders at some time in their life.

We look forward to seeing the work that Dr. Levine can accomplish to further the field of health as a true supporter and advocate.

Signed,

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) Board of Directors





February 24, 2020

Senator Susan Collins & Senator Patty Murray & Senator Richard Burr
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear U.S. Senate,

OUT Maine would like to heartily express our support for the confirmation of Dr. Rachel Levine as Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Levine's nomination is historic in that an openly transgender person has never before been considered for a position this senior. To our knowledge, this nomination is the first time there has ever been an openly transgender appointee so eligible for confirmation.

As an organization that works directly with Maine's LGBTQ+ youth population, actions like this nomination are strongly felt throughout our community. It raises the bar of potential role models for transgender and other queer youth, giving them the hope that they can aim higher than ever before. As the confirmation process starts, we sincerely hope you consider all who are watching, particularly all of the youth who need this inspiration and hope. Please ensure that this hearing does not convey any transphobia or even microaggressions against this incredibly vulnerable community.

We also are extremely excited by Dr. Levine's extensive qualifications. Her leadership position running the health systems for the 6th largest state during the pandemic puts her at an elite level. Leaders in her own association also conveyed their complete faith by electing her president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, further underscoring the esteem she has from peers in her field.

This nomination is an incredible opportunity to make a strong statement of support for all of our transgender youth, while bringing much needed expertise to our nation's health and human services. On behalf of the many LGBTQ+ youth in Maine, we urge you to confirm her expeditiously.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jeanne Dooley'.

Jeanne Dooley, MSW
Executive Director



Penn Medicine

University of Pennsylvania Health System

February 19, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chairwoman, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

Penn Medicine is proud to support President Joe Biden's nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as the Department of Health and Human Services' next Assistant Secretary of Health.

Penn Medicine is a regional integrated health care system comprised of the Perelman School of Medicine and the University of Pennsylvania Health System that includes six acute-care hospitals and hundreds of outpatient practices across southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. We serve a diverse group of patients across the continuum of care. We have had the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Rachel Levine, and strongly support her nomination.

As you are aware, Dr. Levine has been a leading health figure in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, whether it be during her tenure as the state's Secretary of Health, as the former physician general, or as a pediatrician. We commend her efforts to address health equity, to save lives, and to fight and prevent diseases, and Penn Medicine is fortunate to have witnessed and grown from her leadership. Dr. Levine's background and expertise will be critical as the nation continues its public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have appreciated Dr. Levine's partnership in efforts to make the Commonwealth a better place for our patients. We are excited to see the direction Dr. Levine will take our nation in as we navigate multiple public health crises. Her experience and leadership will be an asset. Thank you for your consideration of her nomination.

With warm regards,

Kevin B. Mahoney
 Chief Executive Officer
 University of Pennsylvania Health System

Patrick J. Brennan, MD
 Chief Medical Officer
 University of Pennsylvania Health System



Penn State College of Medicine
Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
Mail Code H162
500 University Drive
P.O. Box 850
Hershey, PA 17033
717-531-8323

February 19, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Burr,

I am writing to support the appointment of Rachel Levine, M.D., as Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Levine has served as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health since 2017, during which time she has provided significant counsel and leadership to health organizations and providers throughout a variety of challenges. She led many of Pennsylvania's efforts to combat the opioid epidemic, and has served as the chief architect for our commonwealth's COVID-19 education, outreach, testing and vaccination initiatives.

For two years prior to this role, she was Pennsylvania's Physician General.

Dr. Levine was recruited to these state leadership roles following 19 years of exemplary service as a physician at the Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and as a member of our faculty at Penn State College of Medicine. Dr. Levine was highly regarded by her patients, peers and medical students. She was recognized as a dedicated mentor and innovative educator by our learners, and earned a national reputation for excellence in her fields of adolescent medicine, eating disorders, and transgender medicine. She has significant experience lecturing locally, nationally, and even internationally on these topics.

During her time as Chief of our Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders, she played a pivotal role in building the program from its inception. She served successfully as Vice Chair for Clinical Services for the Department of Pediatrics at Penn State Children's Hospital. She also worked closely with our Office of Diversity as the liaison for LGBT affairs, mentoring and assisting LGBT students, faculty, and staff.



Penn State College of Medicine
Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
Mail Code H162
500 University Drive
P.O. Box 850
Hershey, PA 17033
717-531-8323

Page 2

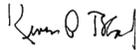
Her strengths include her ability to collaborate and build consensus among individuals with diverse perspectives, which has served the people of Pennsylvania well, both during her time as a faculty member with us and as the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health. These strengths would serve the Biden Administration and American public well.

Personally, Dr. Levine is compassionate, courageous, and inspiring.

In summary, Dr. Levine is well known and highly respected among the faculty, staff, students and patients within our academic community, and among those who serve in the public health arena in Pennsylvania. I offer my strong support for her appointment to this position.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Kevin P. Black, MD
Interim Dean
Penn State College of Medicine



Pennsylvania Equality Project
PO Box 976
Edinboro, PA 16412-0976
www.paequality.com

February 19, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Confirmation of Dr. Rachel Levine to be Assistant Secretary of Health

Dear Senators:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors for the Pennsylvania Equality Project, Inc., a 501c3 non-profit organization, that seeks fairness and equality under the law for all Pennsylvanians regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. I am calling on you to confirm Dr. Rachel Levine to the position of Assistant Secretary of Health under the Department of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Levine's credentials are simply excellent. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, and the Academy for Eating Disorders. Furthermore, she is President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO). Dr. Levine has demonstrated her ability to lead the Pennsylvania Department of Health under Governor Tom Wolf during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to her efforts many Pennsylvanian lives have been saved. I encourage you and your colleagues to agree with President Biden, that Dr. Levine is the best person for this job at this time.

Sincerely,

David E. Moore
President and Founder
Pennsylvania Equality Project



1300 L Street, NW/ Suite 800
Washington DC, 20005
202.218.4400 (phone)
202.218.4409 (fax)
www.phf.org

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

The Public Health Foundation (PHF) is pleased to support President Biden's nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health of the Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Levine has demonstrated the skills, capability, and compassion necessary for this important position. We respectfully request the Senate's confirmation of Dr. Levine as our nation's next Assistant Secretary for Health.

In her former role as Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine was a strong leader in many areas of public health, including one area most prominent today – preparedness and response. She demonstrated her commitment and ability to assure that necessary and just-in-time training was provided to her agency's workforce as well as other professionals and volunteers throughout the Commonwealth playing essential roles in preparedness and response. Dr. Levine has always reached across sectors and professions to assure the best combination of skills and capabilities to protect and promote the population's health.

PHF is a national non-profit and non-partisan organization focused on improving the health of communities. We have witnessed Dr. Levine's laser-focus on the health of all those living in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the science-based, compassionate, and non-partisan actions she has taken for the betterment of the entire population. It is without any doubt that Dr. Levine will apply her experience, knowledge, and energy to work towards improving and protecting the health of all Americans.

It is a pleasure and honor to support Dr. Levine's appointment as Assistant Secretary for Health. In the event you have any questions or PHF can be of any assistance during the confirmation process, please do not hesitate to contact me, rbialek@phf.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ron Bialek'.

Ron Bialek, MPP
President and CEO
Public Health Foundation



Senator Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Dr. Rachel Levine's Nomination for Assistant Secretary for Health

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

The REDC Consortium would like to express its full support of Dr. Rachel Levine's nomination as Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The REDC Consortium is a national professional organization representing eating disorders care focused on standards, policy, research, and best practices working to collaboratively address issues impacting access to and quality of eating disorder treatment programs across the US for individuals and their families.

Dr. Rachel Levine has a long and distinguished career in the field of public health, with a particular focus earlier in her career on adolescent health and eating disorders. While most recently the Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in 2005 Dr. Levine founded the Division of Adolescent Medicine at Penn State Children's Hospital at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and served as Chief of the Division from 2005-2015. In this role, she built a vibrant department overseeing the care of adolescents across a broad spectrum of medical and mental health issues. She also served as Director of the Eating Disorders Program overseeing multidisciplinary treatment programs for children, adolescents, and adults. Many in REDC have had the honor to work with Dr. Levine over the years and find her to be thoughtful, insightful, fair minded, and incredibly devoted to those she serves. She is also strong advocate for LGBT access to care issues and access for gender confirmation treatment for transgender individuals.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, she helped establish the COVID-19 Department Operations Center, rapidly expanded testing, and organized the distribution of PPE across the state, with a particular focus on equity for vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. In addition to her work on the pandemic, Dr. Levine also led innovative efforts to address the opioid crisis, expand the capabilities of the state's Bureaus of Epidemiology and Laboratories, and increased physician education in the areas of opioid prescribing and alternative treatments of pain.

Dr. Levine is a highly respected leader; in each of her past roles she has been sought after for her leadership skills, her ability to bring people together, and to represent an array of perspectives. As a very recent example, in 2020 she was appointed President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. Across her many tenure, she has continually served the healthcare needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs of underserved populations including the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities.

The REDC strongly expresses its support for Dr. Levine's confirmation as Assistant Secretary for Health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jillian G. Lampert, PhD, RD, LD, MPH, FAED'.

Jillian G. Lampert, PhD, RD, LD, MPH, FAED
President, REDC Consortium



February 23, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for Dr. Rachel Levine

Dear Senators Murray and Burr,

SAGE strongly supports the nomination of Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health, Rachel Levine, to be the United States Assistant Secretary of Health. As the President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, a pediatrician, a leader in addressing the opioid crisis while serving as Pennsylvania's Physician General, a professor at the Penn State College of Medicine, and until recently, the head of Pennsylvania's COVID-19 response, Dr. Levine has the experience we need to help lead our nation's response to COVID-19 at this critical time.

Dr. Levine would be the first openly transgender Senate-confirmed White House appointee. As an LGBT aging organization, we know the importance of older transgender people having a seat at the table. We can think of no better person to give voice to the challenges that transgender older people face.

The last four years have taught us, among other things, that competent, caring, and science-based leadership must come from the top. LGBT older people, who first faced the HIV/AIDS epidemic 40 years ago, certainly know this to be true. As the United States and the rest of the world search for a light at the end of the tunnel for the COVID-19 pandemic, we are mindful that we need a qualified and compassionate person at the helm who will ensure that no people in our country – including LGBT older people – will be left behind.

We are tackling the most significant health crisis of our lifetime. There is no time to waste. We look forward to the Senate quickly voting to confirm Dr. Levine so that she can get to work for the American people.

Sincerely,

Aaron Tax
Director of Advocacy



SEIU Healthcare.
United for Quality Care

MATTHEW YARNELL
President

JESSE WILDERMAN
Secretary-Treasurer

LISA FRANK
Executive Vice President

MORGAN LINDSEY
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Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

February 19, 2021

Dear Senators and Committee Members,

On behalf of the 45,000 healthcare workers of SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania, I provide our full support of Dr. Rachel Levine for Assistant Secretary of Health.

As COVID-19 ravaged our nation, Dr. Levine exhibited steadfast leadership. For the past 11 months she has navigated the people of Pennsylvania through this pandemic with a focus on public health, guided by science and health experts. In her briefings to the Commonwealth, Dr. Levine was committed and focused on protecting the people of our state and earned rightful respect from the healthcare professionals we represent.

Dr. Levine's door was always open to nurses and health professionals. Through our Nurse Advisory Council, organized in collaboration with Nurses of Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine met regularly with nurses on the frontlines of the pandemic to take in their experiences and advisement in shaping the state's recovery and response to COVID-19.

Finally, as an organization whose members care deeply about equality and LGBTQ+ rights, we celebrate the nomination of Dr. Levine -- the first openly transgender official to be appointed to a cabinet-level position -- as another milestone in our long road to truly building a world of equity and inclusion for everyone.

The only way through this pandemic is by listening to healthcare experts and Dr. Levine has shown through her leadership here in the Commonwealth that she will be an invaluable addition to the President Biden's cabinet.

In Unity,

Matthew Yarnell, President, SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania

1500 N. 2nd Street, Suite 12
Harrisburg, PA 17102
717.238.3030

SisTers PGH

Trans-led community center,
resource provider, and shelter
transitioning program



2014 Monongahela Ave
Swissvale, PA 15218
412-297-0548

www.sisterspgh.org
info@sisterspgh.org

Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murry and Burr,

We at SisTers PGH are proud to stand in enthusiastic support of Dr. Rachel Levine as U.S. Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services.

For the past year, Levine has worked with the Pennsylvania Assistant Secretary of Health's office to build critical bridges between federal and state policies on the pandemic, and keeping Keystone State residents up-to-date with critical information about the coronavirus.

Levine has also published and lectured widely on LGBTQ+ medicine, among other pressing topics, including the opioid crisis, and is precisely the kind of leader our nation needs in these uncertain times. Our organization works firsthand with folks experiencing discrimination in medicine and addiction services, and we trust Levine will work to dismantle systemic oppression within healthcare.

We urge the Senate to confirm Dr. Rachel Levine so America can move forward and begin to bring equity and dignity to healthcare access and treatment.

Sincerely,

Ciora Thomas
Founder/Director, SisTers PGH



February 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Burr:

The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM), representing 1,200 adolescent health and medicine professionals, is honored to offer its highest level of support for the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as Assistant Secretary of Health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Dr. Levine is a pediatrician and adolescent medicine subspecialist, and has been a member and Fellow of SAHM for nearly three decades. She is an effective and trusted leader across multiple health domains and at multiple levels, including adolescent and young adult health, eating disorders, LGBTQ+ health, substance use, and opioid disorder among all ages.

Most recently, Dr. Levine received the 2020 American Academy of Pediatrics Child Health Advocate Award, and she became the 2020 President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), demonstrating her leadership at the national level.

As Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Dr. Levine led Pennsylvania's response to the pandemic, establishing a COVID-19 Department of Operations Center, and serving as a national voice to reinforce the need for the federal government to partner with state leadership. The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency continues to severely impact patients and providers. Dr. Levine's confirmation will ensure HHS is in the best position to respond to this ongoing health care crisis.

Dr. Levine is consistently thoughtful, thorough, well-informed, and highly professional. Her record clearly demonstrates her talent and commitment to advance extraordinarily challenging

public health issues, and she has a remarkable track record of developing and implementing pragmatic solutions to bring about real change.

Dr. Levine is clearly an outstanding candidate for the position of Assistant Secretary of Health at HHS, and we thank you for the opportunity to support her nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Kahn".

Jessica Kahn, MD, MPH, FSAHM
President, Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine



February 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chairman, Health, Education, Labor,
 and Pensions
 U.S. Senate
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Burr
 Ranking Minority Member, Health, Education,
 Labor and Pensions
 U.S. Senate
 Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support of Nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine as DHHS Assistant Secretary for Health

Dear Senators Murray and Burr:

The [Society for Public Health Education](#) (SOPHE) strongly supports the nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health at the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

As Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 2018, Dr. Levine has been a progressive and effective leader in addressing the opioid epidemic, advancing LGBTQ equity, protecting rural health, and directing the state's public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further, Dr. Levine's experience as president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) is invaluable to understanding the work and needs of frontline public health workers.

At this time in our nation's history, Dr. Levine's experience and decisive leadership is especially needed at the national level to oversee key health offices and programs across the department, 10 regional health offices nationwide, the Office of the Surgeon General and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. SOPHE applauds Dr. Levine's nomination and looks forward to working with her in addressing the inequities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and overall health, including those of LGBTQ community.

Founded in 1950, SOPHE provides global leadership to the profession of health education and health promotion and promotes the health of society. SOPHE members represent some 4,000 professionals and students at the national level and in 22 chapters who work in state/local government and other agencies to advance health education theory and research, develop disease prevention and health promotion programs, and promote public policies conducive to health.

SOPHE urges the Senate to promptly confirm Dr. Rachel Levine as DHHS Assistant Secretary for Health.

Sincerely,

Cam Escoffery, PhD, MPH, CHES®
 President, 2020-2021

Elaine Auld, MPH, MCHES®
 Chief Executive Officer

SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION (SOPHE) • 10 G ST, NE, SUITE 605, WASHINGTON DC 20002 • P: 202.408.9804
 • F: 202-408-9815 • WWW.SOPHE.ORG



February 19, 2021

Re: Letter of Support for the nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman
The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Burr:

I serve as Pediatrician-in-Chief and Chair of Pediatrics at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children. St. Christopher's is a 188-bed facility located in North Philadelphia and provides care to children throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey. It is located in one of the poorest Congressional Districts in the U.S. and serves a diverse population of patients largely dependent on Medicaid. Additionally, the hospital hosts the 11th largest Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education program in the United States.

With great enthusiasm, I provide this letter of support for Dr. Rachel Levine for Assistant Secretary for Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I have no personal relationship with Dr. Levine nor conflict of interest in providing this letter of support.

As a national leader in public health, disaster preparedness, and medicine, Dr. Levine's reputation surrounding her work during the pandemic is unsurpassed. From her tenure earlier in her career as a clinical leader addressing adolescent eating disorders at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital-Milton S. Hershey Medical Center to her role as Secretary of Health, she has improved many lives and left an indelible mark on the health of millions of Pennsylvanians. Her positive impact on maternal and child health, disaster preparedness, and combatting the opioid epidemic, some of the Commonwealth's most pressing public health needs, has been profound.

My first interaction with Dr. Levine was during her tenure at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital. Her work and development of services for adolescent eating disorders and mental health services soon evolved into national standards for colleagues to emulate.



Dr. Levine has long been focused on emergency preparedness and protecting the lives of the most vulnerable Pennsylvanians. As Chief of the Center for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs at St. Christopher's, we applied and secured a CDC-funded contract regarding a home assessment initiative for children and youth with special health care needs across the Commonwealth. Secretary Levine actively participated in the meetings and championed the team's work, providing her tireless support and wisdom.



A later interaction with Dr. Levine was in the Spring of 2019 during our Annual Maternal and Child Health Symposium. She was the keynote presenter on the opioid epidemic in Pennsylvania, and I was honored to serve as one of the event's organizers. The Symposium is made possible through a Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau's MCH Public Health Catalyst Program Grant. At the

conclusion of the event, Dr. Levine was presented with the Sabina Rosen Safe Motherhood Award in Public Health for her efforts to protect women and children in Pennsylvania.

As a pediatrician, Dr. Levine has long advocated for children's health and wellness issues and is an active member of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) at both the national and local levels. Dr. Levine attended and presented at AAP events, received awards, and always speaks eloquently and articulates a systematic and evidence-based approach to policy development in combatting public health issues.

In June of 2019, St. Christopher's parent company filed for bankruptcy, and the hospital was marketed for sale. Our sister hospital, Hahnemann University Hospital, was closed as part of the bankruptcy proceedings and represented the largest orphaning of medical residents in the United States history. Providers grew concerned for St. Christopher's long-term viability and the fate of the patients and families we are honored to serve. During the bankruptcy proceedings, under the direction of Governor Wolf and Secretary Levine, the Pennsylvania Department of Health appointed a temporary manager to oversee the closure of Hahnemann, as well as the continuing operations at St. Christopher's Hospital. Dr. Levine and her staff maintained regular communications and held frequent meetings with clinical and administrative leaders at St. Christopher's to ensure a continued focus on patient safety, quality care, and adequate supplies during the bankruptcy proceedings and subsequent sale. Her devotion to our pediatric patients was instrumental in ensuring the viability of an essential children's hospital in Philadelphia. Dr. Levine understood the important role our hospital plays in addressing health disparities head-on in order to help overcome social and economic factors affecting the community's health. We will be forever grateful for her and this outcome.



Most recently, Secretary Levine led us through the COVID-19 pandemic with unwavering leadership. Undoubtedly, her work will continue to inform the government's and healthcare providers' responses in addressing future public health crises.

Dr. Levine leaves behind a legacy of integrity, compassion, and improved health care outcomes in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We have been fortunate to have her as our Secretary of Health during the last seven years. I am a better pediatrician for having had her as a colleague. Pennsylvania is a better Commonwealth for having her as our healthcare leader. As providers, our touchstone when facing policy and public health issues should be, "What would Rachel Levine do?" That will lead us to the correct path.

Dr. Levine is one of the most influential healthcare professionals and policy leaders in the United States. As such, I wholeheartedly recommend Dr. Rachel Levine as Assistant Secretary for Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services without reservation. While we are sad to see her leave her role as Secretary of Health for Pennsylvania, I look forward to all that she will accomplish on behalf of our great nation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely yours,



Renee M. Turchi, MD, MPH, FAAP
Chair of Pediatrics and Pediatrician in Chief
St. Christopher's Hospital for Children
Professor of Pediatrics, Drexel University College of Medicine
Professor of Community Health and Prevention, Drexel Dornsife School of Public Health
St. Christopher's Hospital for Children
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Phone: 215-427-5331
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Laura A. Siminoff, PhD
Dean, College of Public Health
 Bell Building, Suite 374A
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 Philadelphia, PA 19122

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Web: cph.temple.edu
 siminoffresearchgroup.org

February 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
 The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
 428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

By way of introduction, I serve as the Dean of Temple University's College of Public, a Pennsylvania urban research institution of higher education rooted in the North Philadelphia community. I am honored to offer my support for President Biden's nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine for Assistant Secretary of Health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As you will quickly assess, Dr. Levine will bring rigorous training from Harvard University and Tulane Medical School, experience as chief resident at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, and tenure of public service in top medical posts to the position for which she has been nominated. Dr. Levine is recognized for her accomplishments by her peers and is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Academy for Eating Disorders, and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine. She also serves as President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO).

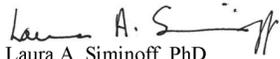
Most recently, Dr. Levine served as Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health. When she stepped into this position as Acting Secretary in 2017, no one could have anticipated the COVID-19 global pandemic. Dr. Levine became widely known and heralded for her efforts to keep 12.8 million Pennsylvanians safe from COVID-19, joining Governor Tom Wolf in coordinating the Commonwealth's COVID-19 response. In her public briefings, Dr. Levine excelled at delivering critical yet difficult news in a reassuring manner. These decisions, such as the statewide stay-at-home-order in spring 2020, were consistently based on evidence and backed by science and saved many lives. Dr. Levine's steady hand, along with her deep compassion, assisted Pennsylvanians to withstand the pandemic and guide them through this historic period of time.

Among her many bold accomplishments as Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health, Dr. Levine led a statewide standing order for the opiate overdose reversal drug naloxone, allowing anyone to obtain this life-saving drug at a pharmacy, without a prescription, at a time when Pennsylvania was particularly impacted by the opioid epidemic. She also spearheaded efforts to ensure Medicaid coverage for transgender health services.

Notably, before becoming Secretary of Health, Dr. Levine won bipartisan state Senate confirmation to become Pennsylvania's Physician General. She met with senators in their offices to address their concerns—most of which centered on her identity as a transgender woman—and discussed her ideas on public health; she ultimately received confirmation in a unanimous vote. Her ability to reach diverse constituents and speak to the needs of many has made her an inspiration, especially to young people. I know Dr. Levine will bring tremendous energy and dedication to the task of tackling the enormous health challenges facing our nation.

In closing, I respectfully request the Committee provide full and fair consideration for Dr. Levine's nomination as Assistant Secretary of Health. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if the College of Public Health can offer further assistance in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura A. Siminoff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "L" and "S".

Laura A. Siminoff, PhD
Dean, College of Public Health
Laura H. Carnell Professor of Public Health
Temple University

221



LGBT PA Caucus
c/o AAPA
2318 Mill Rd, Suite 1300
Alexandria, VA 22314-6868

February 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman
The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murry and Senator Burr:

The Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender (LGBT) Physician Assistant (PA) Caucus strongly urges you to confirm Dr. Rachel Levine for the office of Assistant Secretary of Health.

As a recognized constituency organization of the American Academy of PAs, the LGBT PA Caucus mission is achieving LGBT healthcare equality – wherever PAs are providing quality services and PA students are being educated. The Caucus vision is that all PAs and PA students will achieve their full potential, and health outcomes will be independent of social determinants.

We know that Dr. Levine is the most appropriate candidate for Assistant Secretary of Health. She has proven her leadership capabilities in her role as Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, her election as President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials confirms the degree of trust and respect afforded her among her public health colleagues.

Furthermore, Dr. Levine is aware of the disparities within the delivery of healthcare in the United States, as demonstrated by her previous academic work. She is poised to use her position to work toward fairness and equitable care for underserved populations, which, in turn, will make a healthier future for the entire country.

We hope that the Senate recognizes Dr. Levine's skills and accomplishments and confirms her as Assistant Secretary of Health.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Straw".

Jeff Straw, MPAS, PA-C
Secretary
LGBT PA Caucus



February 24, 2021

Dear U.S. Senate:

The National LGBT Cancer Network is a national non-profit working to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ cancer survivors and those at risk by: educating the LGBTQ+ community about our increased cancer risks and the importance of screening and early detection; training health care providers to offer more culturally-competent, safe and welcoming care; and advocating for LGBTQ+ survivors in mainstream cancer organizations, the media and research.

We are writing to express our unreserved support for Dr. Levine's selection for the incoming Assistant Secretary of Health. We have worked with Dr. Levine in several capacities over the last few years. I have personally had the privilege of co-presenting with her at Pennsylvania's annual LGBTQ health conference; we have been a technical assistance provider for several of the different underserved population tobacco programs implemented under her watch; we provided substantiation as she considered, and ultimately moved to collect sexual orientation and gender identity data for COVID testing in the state; and we have a long productive relationship with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, for which she is now the President. In all of those interactions we have been struck by the thoughtfulness, expertise, and insight she has displayed as Secretary of Health in the state of Pennsylvania. It is our considered position that having her in the role of ASH would be an asset to HHS and to the many and diverse communities it serves.

As an organization that works to improve the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ communities, we also cannot ignore the significance of Dr. Levine's historic nomination. As the first openly transgender nominee for this post, her nomination highlights the importance of LGBTQ+ visibility within our communities and within the field of public health. At one point in my career I was also one of the first, in that case it was one of the first openly trans PhD level health researchers. While it may seem an honor, it is in fact a sad comment on the pervasive level of systemic discrimination trans people have experienced. It is well past time discrimination like this was put behind us. Thus it is our sincere hope that she not only has a swift confirmation but is also afforded one based on her significant professional accomplishments and not marred by transphobia or trans baiting tactics.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "NFN Scout".

NFN Scout, MA, PhD
Executive Director
National LGBT Cancer Network

Contact us at 212-675-2633 Visit us at www.cancer-network.org Follow us at twitter: @cancerLGBT



TRANSGENDER RESOURCE CENTER OF NEW MEXICO

TGRCNM.ORG

FEIN: 39-2076744

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

January 22, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Adrien Lawyer, and I am the Executive Director of the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico. I am writing today in strong support of the confirmation of Dr. Rachel Levine as Assistant Secretary of Health. Not only are we thrilled, and so proud, at the possibility of a transgender woman holding such high office in the United States, we are also heartened that Dr. Levine brings the perspective of a pediatrician to her work.

Beyond any of this, though, is the fact that she is incredibly qualified and skilled in the job. Dr. Levine has put in the work as the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, and was also elected President of the ASTHO (Association of State and Territorial Health Officials). She is respected by her peers, and we feel certain that her service will be an important component of the work of the current administration. Thank you for your attention to this letter, and this matter.

Sincerely,

Adrien Lawyer
Executive Director and Co-Founder
505-440-3402
adrien@tgrcnm.org



University of Pittsburgh

Graduate School of Public Health
Office of the Dean

Maureen Lichtveld, MD, MPH
Dean
Professor, Environmental and Occupational Health
Jonas Salk Chair in Population Health

130 Desoto Street
Pittsburgh PA 15261
Tel 412-624-4603
mlichtve@pitt.edu
publichealth.pitt.edu

February 19, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray and Senator Burr:

As Dean of the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh, I would like to support enthusiastically Dr. Rachel Levine's nomination to be Assistant Secretary of Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Her exemplary work in leading Pennsylvania's coronavirus response demonstrates her capability to take on larger responsibilities for the national pandemic response.

In addition to leading the Commonwealth's pandemic response, Dr. Levine has played a critical role locally and nationally on numerous key public health threats, among those, the opioid crisis. Her groundbreaking leadership in creating action collaboratives across agencies to address the addiction and overdose epidemics is a national example. Her election as President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) is a testament to this work, as well as to her national leadership more generally. Finally, as one of the highest-ranking transgender officials in the U.S., she has been a role model and an active leader in initiatives to improve health and wellness for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, including working with our school's center for LGBT health research.

One of the important recent collaborations involving the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health (GSPH) is the launch of two observational epidemiological studies funded by the PADOH, focusing on known or suspected adverse health effects of hydraulic fracturing. This is a burgeoning industry and has experienced unparalleled growth over the past ten years but has also raised concerns among Pennsylvania communities. One study focuses on investigating the relationship between hydraulic fracturing and the development of childhood cancers in Southwestern Pennsylvania; the second study examines acute conditions, such as asthma and birth outcomes. This study will focus on eight counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Washington, and Westmoreland where hydraulic fracturing occurs. These two studies are exemplary of Dr. Levine's leadership in leveraging public health expertise in an intersectoral fashion at the state and national levels.

Letter of support for Dr. Rachel Levine
February 19, 2021
Page 2

I understand that the Committee is working to schedule a confirmation hearing on February 25 for Dr. Levine. I urge you to act swiftly to approve President Biden's nomination of Dr. Levine to this critical position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maureen Lichtveld". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "L".

Maureen Lichtveld, MD, MPH
Dean, Graduate School of Public Health
Professor, Environmental and Occupational Health
Jonas Salk Chair in Population Health



February 22, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Patty Murray and HELP Committee Members:

As President and CEO of the LGBTQ Victory Institute, I write to support Dr. Rachel Levine in her candidacy for Assistant Secretary for Health within the Biden-Harris Administration. Victory Institute works to achieve and sustain global LGBTQ equality through leadership development, training, and convening to increase the number, expand the diversity, and ensure the success of openly LGBTQ elected and appointed officials at all levels of government. Dr. Rachel Levine's years of service as a doctor and leading Pennsylvania's Department of Health make her exceptionally qualified for this role at a time of utmost importance for the health of our country.

Dr. Levine is a highly respected pediatrician trained at Harvard University and Tulane University and a professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at Penn State College of Medicine. Her role as Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health, where she received a unanimous confirmation in 2017, put Dr. Levine in charge of the state's response to Covid-19. Her experience in directing this effort will be vital to our country continuing to make progress against this pandemic. Dr. Levine is also considered an expert in the field including work on some of the most relevant non-Covid related health issues facing the country like: opioid addiction, medical marijuana, and eating disorders.

Dr. Levine would be an important historic first for our country as the first transgender person to be confirmed by the Senate for a Presidential Appointment demonstrating that qualified candidates will not be held back by their gender identity. Victory is proud to work closely with Dr. Levine and we have no doubt that she has inspired future LGBTQ medical professionals to serve their country. We have known Dr. Levine for years and are thankful for her continued service to Pennsylvania and the United States. We emphatically encourage the Senate to move quickly to take advantage of Dr. Levine's exceptional experience and unparalleled qualifications to serve our country as the next Assistant Secretary for Health and ensure the President's commitment that this Administration will 'look like America'.

I would be happy to further discuss with you Dr. Levine's impressive credentials.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Annise D. Parker".

Mayor Annise Parker
President & CEO



Mailing Address:
Whitman-Walker at LIZ
 1377 R Street, NW, Suite 200
 Washington, DC 20009

February 22, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
 Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member
 Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
 United States Senate
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Dr. Rachel Levine as Assistant Secretary for Health

Submitted via Email

Senators Murray and Burr:

Whitman-Walker Institute is pleased to offer this letter in support of the nomination of Dr. Rachel Levine as Assistant Secretary for Health.

Whitman-Walker Institute is part of the Whitman-Walker Health System, a community-centered enterprise committed to advancing health equity and social justice. Whitman-Walker Health, a Federally Qualified Health Center, has provided a wide range of health services to the greater Washington, DC's diverse urban community for almost five decades, with a special focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals and families, persons living with HIV and other individuals and families who face barriers to accessing care. We offer primary medical for all individuals, including those living with HIV; LGBTQ primary and specialty care, including transgender care; dental care; mental health care and addictions counseling and treatment; nurse care management; HIV education, prevention, and testing services; other community health services; and legal services. In calendar year 2019, we provided health services to more than 20,700 individuals and families.

Whitman-Walker Health System includes Whitman-Walker Institute, which incorporates Whitman-Walker's longstanding research, education, and policy advocacy activities. The Institute conducts clinical and community-based research in HIV treatment and prevention, LGBTQ health and wellness, and related issues; advocates for health-promoting, equitable laws, and public policies; and offers clinical training for providers and community education focused on HIV, sexual health, LGBTQ health, and COVID.

☎ 202.745.7000
 🌐 www.whitman-walker.org

Whitman-Walker Health
 1525 14th St., NW
 Washington, DC 20005

Max Robinson Center
 2301 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE
 Washington, DC 20020

Eastern Market
 651 Pennsylvania Ave., SE
 Washington, DC 20003

Whitman-Walker Institute Support for Dr. Rachel Levine ad Assistant Secretary for Health
February 22, 2021
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Dr. Levine is the best possible candidate to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health in this time of extraordinary demands on our public health system. As Secretary of Health for Pennsylvania, the sixth most populous state in the country, Dr. Levine has routinely worked with the HHS Assistant Secretary of Health's Office to build critical bridges between federal and state policies on the pandemic and more. She is the current President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, which is a testament to the level of faith other public health leaders have in her leadership. Dr. Levine is well-positioned to help develop a closer alliance between federal and state public health policies, which is urgently needed in the COVID era.

We urge you and your colleagues to approve Dr. Rachel Levine as Assistant Secretary for Health.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Blanchon', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Donald Blanchon
Chief Executive Officer, Whitman-Walker Health System
1377 R Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20009
dblanchon@whitman-walker.org
202-797-4410

RANKING MEMBER RICHARD BURR

Based on 2020 data, 35.2 percent of high school seniors reported using marijuana in the past year. By comparison, 34.5 percent of high school seniors were using e-cigarettes in the past year. Our public health decision-making should be based on the products that are the most popular among our children and are increasing in use. Marijuana use rivals e-cigarette use among our children and our public health decision-making should reflect these realities.

DATA FOR THE RECORD:

Since 1975, the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey has measured trends in the prevalence of drug and alcohol use among adolescent students across the United States. The MTF survey is funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), a component of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and conducted by the University of Michigan. The most recent MTF data tracks trends in prevalence of various illicit drugs and other products used illegally by 8th graders, 10th graders, and 12th graders from 2017 through 2020, including marijuana and vaping products.¹ The data collected measured use during the following timeframes: lifetime, past year, past month, and daily.

Overall, data indicate that daily marijuana use increased between 2017 and 2020 among 10th and 12th graders while daily vaping amongst 10th and 12th graders decreased between 2019 and 2020.²

Marijuana

In 2020, across the three grade levels, daily marijuana levels are at or near their highest level of use in almost 20 years.³ Daily marijuana prevalence rose in all three grade levels in 2020.

Table 1:

	8th Grade		10th Grade		12th Grade	
	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020
Marijuana						
Lifetime	13.5	14.8	30.7	33.3	45	43.7
Past Year	10.1	11.4	25.5	28	37.1	35.2
Past Month	5.5	6.5	[15.7]	16.6	22.9	21.1
Daily	0.8	1.1	2.9	4.4	4.4	6.9

Data in brackets indicate significant change from the previous year

Source: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-study-trends-in-prevalence-various-drugs>.

As seen in the Table 1, marijuana use in 10th graders has increased in all categories measured (lifetime, past year, past month, daily) since 2017, with daily marijuana usage increasing the most out of all four categories.

- Lifetime marijuana usage for 10th graders increased from 30.7 percent in 2017 to 33.3 percent in 2020.
- Past year usage for 10th graders increased from 25.5 percent in 2017 to 28 percent in 2020.
- Past month usage increased from 15.7 percent in 2017 to 16.6 percent in 2020.
- Daily usage of marijuana increased from 2.9 percent in 2017 to 4.4 percent in 2020.

¹ Data collection for MTF was cut short in 2020 (on March 14, 2020) due to COVID-19 concerns. Therefore, the population surveyed for 2020 is about 30 percent of the size of a typical annual MTF data collection. The data collected, however, does represent a wide geographic range and included students surveyed in each of the 9 U.S. Census geographic division. Analyses of this data indicate that the results of the 2020 MTF data collection did not differ from the results of previous years that included a larger population.

² Daily vaping use data was not collected prior to 2019., <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-study-trends-in-prevalence-various-drugs>.

³ <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2020.pdf>.

While data shows that between 2017 and 2020, lifetime, past year, and past month marijuana usage for 12th graders decreased, daily marijuana usage increased from 5.9 percent in 2017 to 6.9 percent in 2020.

Vaping

Prevalence of daily vaping decreased for all across grade levels from 2019 to 2020.

Table 2:

	10th Grade		12th Grade	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
Vaping, Nicotine Products Daily	6.8	5.6	11.6	8.6
Vaping, Marijuana Products, Daily	3	[1.7]	3.5	2.5
Vaping, Flavored Only Products, Daily	2	1.6	2.8	1.9

Data in brackets indicate significant change from the previous year.

Source: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-trends-in-prevalence-various-drugs>.

Daily Use

As seen in Table 2, 10th and 12th graders reported a decrease of daily vaping between 2019 and 2020 of all vaping product categories, including vaping of nicotine, marijuana, and flavoring only products.

- Daily vaping of nicotine products:
 - 10th grader use decreased from 6.5 percent in 2019 to 5.6 percent in 2020.
 - 12th grader use decreased from 11.6 percent in 2019 to 8.6 percent in 2020.
- Daily vaping of marijuana products:
 - 10th grader use decreased from 3 percent in 2019 to 1.7 percent in 2020.
 - 12th grader use decreased from 3.5 percent in 2019 to 2.5 percent in 2020.
- Daily vaping of flavored only products:
 - 10th grader use decreased from 2 percent in 2019 to 1.6 percent in 2020.
 - 12th grader use decreased from 2.8 percent in 2019 to 1.9 percent in 2020.

Past Month Use

Monthly vaping also decreased amongst 10th and 12th graders between 2019 and 2020.

- Past month usage for 10th graders decreased from 25 percent in 2019 to 23.5 percent in 2020.
- Past month usage for 12th graders decreased from 30.9 percent in 2019 to 28.2 percent in 2020.

Past Year Use

Between 2019 and 2020, the percentage of 10th and 12th graders that had used a vaping product in the past year decreased.

- Past year usage for 10th graders decreased from 35.7 percent in 2019 to 34.6 percent in 2020.
- Past year usage for 12th graders decreased from 40.6 percent to 39 percent in 2020.

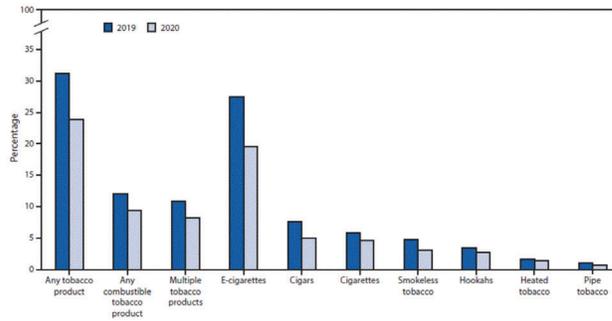
Additionally, the most recent 2020 data from the National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) indicate a decrease in electronic cigarette use from 2019 to 2020 in high school students, from 27.5 percent to 19.6 percent, as illustrated by the figure below.⁴ Of the high school students who currently use any type of flavored e-cigarette, the most common flavors were fruit (73.1%), mint (55.8%), menthol (37.0%), and candy, desserts, or other sweets (36.4%).⁵ NYTS is a cross-sectional, voluntary, school-based, self-administered survey of middle and high school

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6950a1.htm>.

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0909-youth-e-cigarette-use-down.html>.

students in the United States. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) collaborates with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to administer the survey each year.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of current use of selected tobacco products,* any tobacco product,† any combustible tobacco product,‡ and multiple tobacco products§ among high school students — National Youth Tobacco Survey, United States, 2019 and 2020**



Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6950a1.htm>.

[Whereupon, at 12:29 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]