

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2021

Acting Secretary Cochran
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington DC 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Cochran,

Congratulations on your appointment as Acting Secretary of Health and Human Services. We write on behalf of the thousands of our constituents who live, work, or have family members in long-term care facilities and nursing homes who need quick access to vaccines. We urge you to quickly implement lessons learned from states that have opted for a community pharmacist-led approach to reaching vulnerable populations.

Community pharmacists are integral parts of the communities they serve, especially in rural and underserved communities. Their years of providing patient-centered care and wrap-around pharmacy services means they have earned their patients' and their communities' trust. This experience makes them uniquely capable of addressing the high rates of vaccine hesitancy we've seen among minority and underserved communities.^{1 2}

States that placed community pharmacists in leadership roles have seen a much faster distribution of the vaccine to priority populations. In many cases, community pharmacists have the flexibility to cut through red tape and reduce paperwork burdens for patients and their guardians. For example, in West Virginia, the community pharmacists demonstrated great ingenuity in establishing a vaccine drive that finished administering the first round of the vaccine to nursing home residents by the end of December. By comparison, by that same point, most other states had only just begun administering the first dose of the vaccine to nursing home residents.

The stakes could not be higher because nursing home residents are the most vulnerable to severe disease and death from coronavirus infection. More than 100,000 nursing home residents and staff have died from COVID-19 since April.³ As community spread has worsened and cases surged in the past few months, new deaths in long-term care facilities have trended upwards as well.⁴

¹ ["Most nursing home workers don't want the vaccine. Here's what facilities are doing about it,"](#) Washington Post, January 27, 2021.

² ["Vaccine hesitancy is decreasing in the U.S.,"](#) Axios, January 27, 2021.

³ ["COVID-19 Has Claimed the Lives of 100,000 Long-Term Care Residents and Staff,"](#) Kaiser Family Foundation, November 25, 2020.

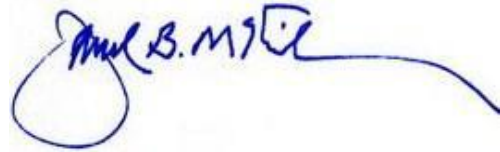
⁴ ["Patterns in COVID-19 Cases and Deaths in Long-Term Care Facilities in 2020,"](#) Kaiser Family Foundation, January 14, 2021.

We urge you to adapt lessons learned from states that have put in place successful, community-led strategies to protect the most vulnerable. Thank you for your attention to his urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abigail D. Spanberger".

Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David B. McKinley".

David B. McKinley
Member of Congress