



Community-Based Workforce Alliance

February 22, 2021

Biden-Harris Administration COVID-19 Response Team:

The undersigned members of the [Community-Based Workforce Alliance](#), a coalition of national and state health equity leaders, applaud the election and inauguration of the Biden-Harris administration, the appointment of renowned experts to lead the COVID-19 response, and the team's collective commitment to advancing public health and racial equity. We also applaud the new Administration's commitment to elevating and investing in trusted community-based workers to help end the pandemic and help our country "build back better."

While the challenges facing your team are truly unprecedented, you have a historic opportunity to end the pandemic, create jobs to rebuild our public health infrastructure, and fast-track local economic recovery by investing in America's community-based workforce, members of whom (particularly community health workers) have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing disparities across a range of health conditions. Community-based workers live in and share culture, language, and life experiences with the members of the communities they serve, including low-income communities and communities with a majority of Black, Latinx, Native and other people of color who have been hardest-hit by the pandemic.

As you set your strategy for pandemic response, health equity, public health and the economy, we urge you to invest in and scale up America's community-based workforce. They include community health workers (CHWs); promotores de salud; community-based nonprofit staff and human services providers; community-based social workers; and other community-based professionals including doulas, peer specialists, caregivers, recovery coaches, family service workers and family development specialists, and health coaches.

Organizations in the [Community-Based Workforce Alliance](#) stand ready to work with you to achieve that goal. In this spirit, the Alliance is pleased to share best practice [Principles for Pandemic Response and Resilience](#) and [A Playbook to Advance Community Health Worker Engagement in COVID-19](#). Both documents were developed with experts in equity from community-based organizations who are deeply committed to community-based workforce development and public health.

Going forward, we strongly urge you to work with Congress, as well as the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Homeland Security, Labor, and Education - in coordination with the COVID-19 Response Coordinator, the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs - to implement the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Work with Congress to authorize funding for 100,000 community health workers as part of the American Rescue Plan.

- **HOW:** Support funding for at least 100,000 community-based workers (as outlined in the American Rescue Plan proposal) in jobs that can support short-term COVID-19 response through the end of 2022. Prioritize direct investment in trusted community-based organizations, workers and jobs rather than [relying primarily on models like FEMA Corps](#). Federal agencies should also require that all state, territorial and local health departments, federally qualified health centers and health systems that receive funding to increase community-based public health jobs coordinate governance and advisory groups inclusive of individuals who live and work in impacted communities. This includes community health workers and promotores (CHW/Ps), nonprofit staff representing the community in organizations providing community-based services, community leaders, and residents with disabilities.
 - **WHY:** While national service programs like FEMA Corps are important, this is the time to invest in and scale up trusted community-based workers and individuals in the public health infrastructure, who are the most well-equipped to address urgent public health and health equity priorities in our hardest-hit communities.

Recommendation 2: In the implementation of the American Rescue Plan, work with federal agencies to recruit, hire, manage and protect community-based workers with a **racial equity** framework to ensure COVID-19 response efforts are impactful and include an authentic, locally-sourced, trusted and culturally and linguistically appropriate workforce.

- **HOW:** Contract with community-based organizations and community health worker (CHW) associations committed to a racial equity framework to conduct recruitment, hiring and training. Use [best practices](#) for management including appropriate caseloads, supportive supervision, competitive compensation (i.e. a living wage), and high-quality evaluation. Protect community-based workers by prioritizing their vaccination, providing personal protective equipment (PPE) commensurate with the level of risk, and include health benefits, sick and hazard pay.
 - **WHY:** While studies have shown that Community Health Workers are effective at improving health and well-being, CHW programs have been historically under-funded and under-supported. This has undermined the impact CHWs can have and has put their livelihood at risk, which then exacerbates inequity since this workforce is disproportionately female and composed of persons of color who are more likely to experience barriers to full time employment, a living wage, and healthcare coverage.

The undersigned organizations are committed to doing everything in our power to help you fulfill your commitment to health equity, racial equity and public health by making swift, historic and bold investments in America's community-based workforce. The health and future of our nation depends on it and we stand ready to support you.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Denise Smith ([Denise Smith dsmith@nachw.org](mailto:dsmith@nachw.org)), Rishi Manchanda ([Rishi Manchanda rishi@healthbegins.org](mailto:rishi@healthbegins.org)), Alex Quinn (Alexandra Quinn quinn@healthleadsusa.org) or Claire Qureshi ([Claire Qureshi claire@chap.health](mailto:claire@chap.health)). Learn more at www.communitybasedworkforce.org

Sincerely,

Arizona Community Health Worker Association
Beyond Flexner Alliance
Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers
Community Health Acceleration Partnership (CHAP)
El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center
FamiliesUSA
HealthBegins
Health Leads
Human Impact Partners
Illinois Community Health Worker Association
InCK Marks Initiative
Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)
Last Mile Health
National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW)
North Carolina Community Health Worker Association
Partners In Health
Penn Center for Community Health Workers
The Center for Health and Social Care Integration
The Mullan Institute
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