



President-elect Joe Biden  
1500 Market St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

November 9, 2020

Dear President-elect Biden:

On behalf of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and its HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), we congratulate you and offer our societies as a resource to you and your staff as you confront the COVID-19 pandemic and other infectious diseases threats. IDSA represents over 12,000 infectious diseases and HIV physicians, scientists, public health professionals and other health care providers. Our members are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, caring for patients, leading multidisciplinary hospital response teams, conducting research, developing infection prevention protocols and collaborating with national, state and local health officials to implement community mitigation measures and provide evidence-based information to the public. We are encouraged by the comprehensive and thoughtful *Biden Plan to Combat Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Prepare for Future Global Health Threats*. **We look forward to learning additional details of the plan and would appreciate the opportunity to meet virtually with you or your senior advisors at your earliest convenience to provide input and to assist you.**

#### **Advancing a National Response Plan Led by Public Health and Scientist Leaders**

From the beginning of the pandemic, IDSA and HIVMA have called for a nationally coordinated response that is grounded in the best available science and have emphasized the importance of clear, consistent, evidence-based messaging to help the public make informed decisions to reduce the risk of transmission. We applaud your promise to put scientists and public health leaders at the center of the response and to establish daily press briefings led by experts. We would be very pleased to support these critical efforts and to work with you to restore the independence of our nation's public health and scientific agencies.

#### **Expanding Testing Capacity and Addressing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Shortages**

We greatly appreciate your focus on expanding testing capacity. It will be critical to ensure not only increased capacity but also more rapid turnaround time. Results must be provided quickly to be actionable for purposes of contact tracing, isolation, quarantine and care. Many health care facilities continue to struggle with shortages of test kits and other testing supplies, such as swabs and reagents. A long-term strategy to ensure a stable inventory, including potentially better leveraging of the Defense Production Act, will be important. Similarly, we greatly appreciate your commitment to providing sufficient PPE. We are extremely concerned that many health care providers still lack appropriate PPE and are reusing N95 respirators. As is the case for testing supplies, a comprehensive, national strategy to support the manufacturing and acquisition of PPE will be critical.

### **Developing Safe and Effective Diagnostic Tests, Therapeutics and Vaccines**

Your call for the acceleration of the development and availability of diagnostic tests, therapeutics and vaccines is critical. It is equally important to ensure that the authorization, licensure or approval of these products is based on sufficient safety and efficacy data as outlined by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and that this data be evaluated by FDA scientists and external expert advisors according to FDA's rigorous standards. Alongside the development of new tools for mitigating the impact of COVID-19, we also must take steps to increase vaccine confidence and uptake. We look forward to working with you to ensure FDA's longstanding position as the guardians of our safe and effective medical products and to reassure the public.

### **Restoring Our Nation's Public Health Infrastructure**

IDSA and HIVMA strongly support your commitment to strengthening our public health infrastructure. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are home to many of the world's leading public health experts, but their response capabilities are hindered by inadequate funding. Significant new resources will be needed to support the continued response, including planning for successful vaccine distribution. We also appreciate your call to strengthen data collection and ensure that data are publicly reported. We urge that the responsibility for collecting, analyzing and reporting data be returned to the public health experts at CDC.

### **Leveraging Telehealth**

We agree with your emphasis on telehealth as a critical tool to provide safe access to medical care. To reduce the digital divide and ensure that telehealth is accessible to all, we support expansion of broadband internet and cell service, which is critical for isolated rural communities. This will have the added benefit of helping students access online education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Addressing Economic Disparities**

We also appreciate the multiple components of your plan aimed at addressing the economic hardships suffered by many in the U.S. during the pandemic. In addition, without these financial supports, essential workers with potential exposure to SARS-CoV-2 can be discouraged from getting tested and quarantining.

### **Supporting a Robust Infectious Diseases Workforce**

As your plan recognizes, a strong expert workforce is necessary to support a successful response to COVID-19 and to effectively prepare for future pandemics and other infectious diseases threats such as HIV, hepatitis C and drug resistant bacterial infections. We greatly appreciate your proposals, particularly to invest in the public health workforce. We would also like to work with you to strengthen other parts of the infectious diseases workforce — particularly infectious diseases physicians and scientists. According to a [study published in the \*Annals of Internal Medicine\*](#), approximately 208 million Americans live in areas with little or no access to an infectious diseases (ID) physician. This is particularly concerning given that ID physician care is associated with improved patient outcomes, shorter lengths of hospital stay and reduced costs. Further, ID scientists are critically important to our research efforts, and this [workforce is also declining](#). We look forward to working with you on [policies](#) and investments to ensure that the U.S. remains a leader in biomedical research.

### **Reinvigorating Global Health Security**

IDSA agrees that international cooperation will be essential to successfully end the COVID-19 pandemic and to prepare for future threats. We are pleased to support the policies you outlined to strengthen our current response and invest in global health security. It also will be critical to renew our commitment to

the World Health Organization and collaborate with other global partners to collectively enhance our response to the pandemic and other global health threats.

**Addressing Ongoing ID Threats and Epidemics**

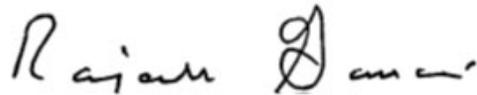
While we must direct significant resources and attention to turning the tide on this deadly pandemic, we cannot ignore other infectious diseases threats and epidemics that likely have been exacerbated by COVID-19. For example, high levels of antibiotic use, particularly early in the pandemic, will potentially exacerbate the ongoing national struggle with antibiotic resistance, necessitating an even greater need for antimicrobial stewardship programs and new antimicrobial drugs. Restricted access to testing, prevention and treatment services calls for redoubling the commitment to ending HIV as an epidemic in addition to heightening the responses to the opioid and hepatitis C epidemics. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us all too clearly the fundamental importance of expanding the infectious diseases workforce, public health infrastructure and biomedical research enterprise necessary to successfully confront the panoply of infectious diseases threats facing our increasingly interconnected world.

We look forward to having the opportunity to meet with you or your senior advisors and hope that you and your staff will call upon us whenever we can be of service. We can be reached through Amanda Jezek, Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Government Relations of the Infectious Diseases Society of America at [ajezek@idsociety.org](mailto:ajezek@idsociety.org) or Andrea Weddle, Executive Director of the HIV Medicine Association at [aweddle@hivma.org](mailto:aweddle@hivma.org).

Sincerely,



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