

## BACKGROUND

More than 165,000 Americans have already lost their lives due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), yet Dr. Robert Redfield, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has warned that the months ahead could be even more dangerous. Specifically, Dr. Redfield expressed concern that a convergence of COVID-19 and the annual flu season could overwhelm the capacity of our health care system.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, CDC has found that immunization rates for life-saving vaccines have plummeted during the pandemic as Americans have attempted to avoid exposure to the virus.<sup>2</sup> Recent reports have also described growing fears among public health and medical professionals that even when a vaccine for COVID-19 is approved, uptake could be dangerously low in communities of color.<sup>3</sup>

In the face of multiple public health threats, CDC has issued important guidance about immunizations during COVID-19: “Ensuring that routine vaccination is maintained or reinitiated during the COVID-19 pandemic is essential for protecting individuals and communities from vaccine-preventable diseases and outbreaks.”<sup>4</sup>

***To ensure that children, adolescents, and adults receive the vaccines they need to protect themselves and their communities, we must provide funding to support evidence-based, community-specific initiatives to increase immunization rates during the COVID-19 pandemic.***

Research shows that locally led efforts, particularly through programs carried out by trusted members of the community like health care providers, public health leaders, and local organizations, can effectively increase immunization rates.<sup>5</sup>

The **Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act**, introduced by Congresswoman Lauren Underwood (IL-14), would provide robust funding to develop, scale, and evaluate local initiatives to boost vaccination rates during this pandemic. These investments will be particularly important for building confidence around an eventual COVID-19 vaccine once one has been proven to be safe and effective.

## SUMMARY

The **Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act** would:

- Provide \$560 million to state and local public health departments to promote Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices-recommended vaccinations during the COVID-19 public health emergency through:
  - Establishing and strengthening partnerships with health care providers, schools, pharmacies, vaccine coalitions, and community-based organizations;
  - Developing culturally and linguistically appropriate information about vaccines and disseminating throughout communities;
  - Conducting outreach to promote health insurance options and immunization programs like Vaccines for Children;
  - Supporting preparations for the distribution of the future COVID-19 vaccine; and
  - Evaluating efforts to improve the effectiveness of future initiatives to promote vaccinations.
- Fund the development and dissemination of vaccine counseling guidance for community immunization providers to be able to effectively communicate with patients about an eventual COVID-19 vaccine once a vaccine has been approved.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/04/21/coronavirus-secondwave-cdcdirector/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/channels/health-forum/fullarticle/2766119>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/08/03/vaccine-minority-communities-389878?nname=illinois-playbook&nid=00000150-1596-d4ac-a1d4-179e288b0000&nrid=00000162-f27b-d67b-a96f-faff4d80000&nliid=639163>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5703404/>

## ENDORSEMENTS

The **Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act** is supported by more than 60 organizations:

**National:** Adult Vaccine Access Coalition (AVAC); Alliance for Aging Research; America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP); American Academy of Family Physicians; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Association of Colleges of Nursing; American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; American Immunization Registry Association; American Nurses Association; American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL); American Pharmacists Association; Anthem, Inc.; Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum; Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology; Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP); Biotechnology Innovation Organization; Blue Cross Blue Shield Association; Children's Health Fund; Children's HealthWatch; Families Fighting Flu; Families USA; Federation of American Hospitals; First Focus Campaign for Children; HealthConnect One; March of Dimes; Medicago; MomsRising; NAACP; National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO); National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP); National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners; National Association of School Nurses; National Birth Equity Collaborative; National Hispanic Medical Association; National League for Nursing; National Partnership for Women & Families; National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable; Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA); Seqirus; Social Security Works; Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine; The AIDS Institute; The American Osteopathic Association; The Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO); The Gerontological Society of America; The Long Term Care Community Coalition; Trust for America's Health; UnidosUS; Vaccinate Your Family; and WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease

**State:** Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago; Blue Shield of California; Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; Community Health Partnership of Illinois; DuPage County Health Department; Greater Elgin Family Care Center; Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics; Kendall County Health Department; Northwestern Medicine; Seattle Children's Hospital; The Center for Health Equity Transformation at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine; The University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System; VNA Health Care; and Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

## ORIGINAL COSPONSORS

The **Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act** is cosponsored by Representative Kim Schrier, M.D. (WA-08); Representative Kathy Castor (FL-14); and Representative Ann McLane Kuster (NH-02).

## CONTACT

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