

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

April 30, 2021

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris
Vice President
United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Vice President Harris:

We deeply appreciate the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to increase domestic access to COVID-19 vaccines, including our most underserved and minority communities, and applaud your administration for the speed of vaccine distribution to the American people. Likewise, we commend your administration's efforts to begin sharing our excess stock of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines with the world once it clears federal safety reviews. We dutifully ask that, in your role overseeing diplomatic relations with our allies in the region, you will prioritize Caribbean and Central American countries for these future vaccine distributions.

Public health experts have long warned of the risks that developing nations would face from Western nations' dominance in the pre-ordering and receiving of vaccine doses, recognizing the insufficient level of production capacity globally. To date, 10 nations currently account for 75 percent of global vaccine distributions. This has inexplicably led to lesser developed nations having to jostle for excess doses, and sets the groundwork for a years-long delay before some nations are able to vaccinate the entirety of their populations. With 53 percent of our adult population with at least one dose of our three authorized vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson, the United States is expected to have enough supply for our entire population by early summer. Thus, we believe it is of utmost importance that the 60 million doses expected to be available be prioritized for vaccination distribution to our Central American and Caribbean allies.

Simply put, delayed vaccine access will undoubtedly lead to more cases of COVID-19 worldwide, and will increase the spread of deadly variants. Not only will continuing on this path impede the recovery of our allies, but it will prolong the public health risk for the American people – leaving our allies in Central America and the Caribbean on their heels. The high frequency of international travel and migration to and from these regions puts the United States in a precarious position should they not be prioritized. Critically, the United States' prioritization of these regions in our global vaccination efforts will counterbalance the vaccine diplomacy efforts of China and Russia, which include disinformation campaigns designed to harm the United States' interests in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Your administration's leadership has put our nation on a path towards success, and it is our belief that by prioritizing our Caribbean and Central American neighbors, they too can be put on paths to success and recovery – and as a result, the health and safety of the American people can be preserved.

We greatly appreciate your administration's steadfast efforts to vaccinate every American and your reestablishment of the norms, principles, and talent that have long made the United States a beacon of leadership on the world stage. In this light, we believe that the administration should prioritize the Caribbean and Central America as it plans to export additional excess doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and we stand ready to support your administration at every step along the way.

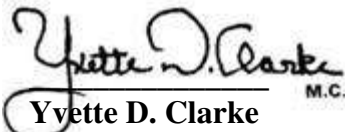
Sincerely,



Adriano Espaillat
Chair
Congressional Friends of the
Dominican Republic Caucus



Albio Sires
Chair
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere,
Civilian Security, Migration, and
International Economic Policy



Yvette D. Clarke
Co-Chair
Congressional Caribbean Caucus



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Chair
Congressional Hispanic Caucus

CC: David A. Kessler
Chief Science Officer
White House COVID-19 Response
Team
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, MD
Chair
The COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services
Office of Minority Health
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201