

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510
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<http://www.senate.gov>

September 22, 2021

Jeffrey Zients
White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Zients:

We write today out of growing concern for the health and wellbeing of the American people. Over the last few months, our progress towards combating COVID-19 has been interrupted – cases of the SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant are surging across the country, mounting pressure on health care systems and forcing hospitals to turn away patients. We have lost too many lives to the resurgence of the pandemic, especially when we have safe and effective vaccines to combat this virus.

On July 4th, President Biden declared that the nation had “gained the upper hand” on COVID-19. This announcement came when cases were rapidly falling, hospitals reached pre-pandemic caseloads, and Americans were planning for the return of their children to school in the fall. This progress was the direct result of the success of Operation Warp Speed (OWS), a testament to American innovation and ingenuity and a visionary response to tackle the virus. With the help of nearly \$50 billion in funding from Congress, OWS efforts, in partnership with the private sector, resulted in the availability of three U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized vaccines and several therapeutic treatments.

Not only did OWS accelerate the development of these life-saving vaccines, it ensured that they would be distributed to Americans immediately following authorization. On day one of the Biden administration, more than 16 million doses of vaccine had already reached Americans, with millions more on the way, and the country was on track to easily reach the president’s goal of 100 million vaccines administered in the first 100 days in office. Yet, in a matter of months, the Biden administration created confusion and exacerbated vaccine hesitancy.

The Delta variant continues to spread across the country, along with reported cases of the newly detected Mu variant, and there is still no clear strategy to bring this pandemic to an end. For these reasons, Congress and the American people deserve answers. Therefore, we request responses to the questions below by September 30, 2021:

1. What process is in place to coordinate across federal agencies and empower scientists and career experts to follow standards and processes that determine vaccine, therapeutic and testing announcements?
2. Why did the White House announce vaccine boosters would be available to all Americans prior to any scientific or regulatory work being done to approve or authorize such boosters?
3. What steps are you putting in place to avoid politics overpowering the science when addressing the public and guiding our response to COVID-19?
4. What studies are being conducted or relied upon to evaluate the necessity of boosters for all Americans?
5. How is the administration preparing for potential future variants and their impact on vaccines?

6. What is the strategy for distributing vaccines to 5 to 11 year olds as soon as they are approved?
7. What is the status of clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines in children under 5 years?
8. How is the administration continuing to support and work with the private sector conducting these studies?
9. HHS recently announced it will place limits on states' access to monoclonal antibody drugs. What was the administration's rationale for limiting access to these life-saving treatments, especially in areas experiencing a COVID-19 surge?
10. In a global world, disease is a plane ride away from the United States. That is why it is important to have a coherent strategy for global vaccine distribution.
 - a. How much Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) funding has been used to purchase vaccines for other countries?
 - b. How is the administration determining which countries receive vaccines in bilateral agreements and at what amounts?
 - c. How is the administration balancing the need to stockpile vaccines with the desire to donate vaccines to the developing world?

While we are familiar with the administration's newly announced six-point plan to refocus the federal response on the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe the American people deserve greater and more detailed information on how this administration is going to utilize the greatest weapon made available thanks to OWS to combat the disease with clear and concise plans that put science ahead of politics. We look forward to receiving responses to our questions by September 30, 2021.

Sincerely,



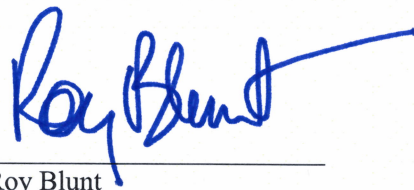
Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions



Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader



Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance



Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-
Health and Human Services and Education