



July 20, 2020

The Honorable Diana DeGette
The Honorable Brett Guthrie
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeGette and Ranking Member Guthrie:

Thank you for holding a hearing, "Pathway to a Vaccine: Efforts to Develop a Safe, Effective and Accessible COVID-19 Vaccine." The Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) appreciates the opportunity to share its thoughts with you on this important issue.

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. It is the exclusive forum for the nation's healthcare leaders to jointly develop policies, plans, and programs to achieve their vision of a 21st century healthcare system that makes affordable high-quality care accessible to all Americans. Members of HLC – hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, post-acute care providers, home care providers, and information technology companies – advocate for measures to increase the quality and efficiency of healthcare through a patient centered approach.

The COVID-19 health pandemic has created health and economic challenges for all Americans. While stay-at-home orders slowed down the spread of COVID-19 and allowed for medical facilities to better treat patients suffering from COVID-19, the development of a vaccine is essential to begin the process of fully reopening. We applaud the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) decision to establish Operation Warp Speed (OWS) to leverage existing knowledge and resources between public and private stakeholders. We appreciate Congress' support for OWS by appropriating approximately \$10 billion for research and development initiatives.

As a result of this unprecedented public-private partnership between health researchers, private industry and federal, state and local officials, over 100 vaccine


trials are underway¹ and OWS funds will go to support three Phase-III clinical trial studies for an effective vaccine. While a successful vaccine typically takes years to develop, federal officials have voiced optimism that they will be able to meet their January 2021 deadline of delivering an effective vaccine.²

HLC greatly supports these initiatives and encourages Congress to support health officials in delivering a safe and effective vaccine to Americans. We also highlight the need for any vaccine to be affordable and accessible, so anyone who wishes to receive a vaccination will be able to do so. It is important that officials also engage in education and outreach initiatives to encourage Americans to receive an effective COVID-19 vaccination.

We hope that the benefits of the public-private partnership within OWS can be extended on a number of other issues the COVID-19 health pandemic has exposed such as strains in the supply chain for essential items such as personal protective equipment (PPE) as well as challenges to care delivery and how to improve those difficulties to ensure that we are sufficiently prepared for future health pandemics.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and HLC looks forward to working with the committee in improving preparedness for future health pandemics. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Tina Grande at tgrande@hlc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary R. Grealy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" being the most prominent.

Mary R. Grealy
President

¹ Jonathan Corum, et al, *Coronavirus Vaccine Tracker*, The New York Times, July 16, 2020 (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/science/coronavirus-vaccine-tracker.html>)

² Julie Steenhuisen, *Fauci bullish on prospects for U.S. vaccine, not worried about China winning race*, Reuters, July 15, 2020 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-fauci/fauci-bullish-on-prospects-for-u-s-vaccine-not-worried-about-china-winning-race-idUSKCN24G2ZY>)