



March 17, 2022

President Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20502

Re: Critical funding needed to sustain necessary pandemic care to help prevent detrimental loss of access and backsliding on health equity

Dear President Biden,

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) writes to urge for collaboration across the Administration and Congress to ensure allocation of funding for the Uninsured Program administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Increasing Community Access to Testing (ICATT) program and the Community-Based Testing Sites (CBTS) program, the Coverage Assistance Fund (CAF), among other COVID-19 care programs.¹ These essential programs promote equitable vaccination, testing, and treatment access for the public, including vulnerable, uninsured Americans. Any premature lapse in funding that splinters care access threatens to disintegrate the robust, equity-driven COVID-19 pandemic response that has so far saved more than a million lives.²

Through the ICATT and CBTS programs, for example, pharmacies among other healthcare providers, continue to offer expanded access to needed COVID-19 testing in communities across the country. Pharmacies help provide more than 20,000 COVID-19 testing sites nationwide, including state and federal programs, and 70% of such sites are in areas with moderate to severe social vulnerability.^{3,4} Community-based testing programs have administered millions of COVID-19 tests, and uninterrupted testing access for the American people remains critical to the nation's ongoing response efforts.

Additionally, through the Uninsured Program, healthcare providers, including pharmacies, community clinics, and hospitals, have been able to help meaningfully improve and sustain access for uninsured populations to receive essential COVID-19-related care. For example, pharmacies have been able to provide more than 11 million COVID-19 vaccinations to uninsured individuals through this program.⁵

However, funding for the HRSA Uninsured Program will begin to lapse in less than one week, despite the clear value and benefit this program has fostered for the American public. Once funding expires, healthcare providers will no longer be able to submit claims for providing care to uninsured individuals. This places healthcare providers in an extremely tenuous position. While healthcare providers, including pharmacies, want to continue providing access to care for their patients, including the underserved, the

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/15/fact-sheet-consequences-of-lack-of-funding-for-efforts-to-combat-covid-19-if-congress-does-not-act/>

² The Commonwealth Fund. The U.S. COVID-19 Vaccination Program at One Year: How Many Deaths and Hospitalizations Were Averted? December 14, 2021. Available at: <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2021/dec/us-covid-19-vaccination-program-one-year-how-many-deaths-and>

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/01/14/fact-sheet-the-biden-administration-to-begin-distributing-at-home-rapid-covid-19-tests-to-americans-for-free/>

⁴ <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/01/07/hhs-continues-community-based-testing-sites-covid-19.html>

⁵ HRSA data as of January 2022

support structure to sustainably do so is in imminent jeopardy. Allowing the expiration of funding could create extreme confusion at the pharmacy counter, affecting team members and patients alike. Ultimately, this could result in the tragedy of increasing disparities in access to critically needed care and patients forgoing care.

The loss of access, as a result of expiring COVID-19 care programs, could undermine the nation's broader, comprehensive response efforts, and NACDS agrees that inaction at this pivotal time could set the nation back, leave the nation less prepared, and may cost the nation more lives.⁶ We understand the American people are ready to leave the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the past and move forward with optimism. However, doing so without maintaining the necessary readiness increases undue risk for the nation. Unresolved challenges and uncertainties related to COVID-19 still require attention, including the potential for another surge, emergence of new variants of concern, inconsistent vaccination rates across the country, and disproportionately high risks for certain, vulnerable populations. Therefore, this reallocation of funding to maintain COVID-19 care programs is essential for the nation to continue mounting a sustained pandemic response that effectively prioritizes the health and wellbeing of the American people – including the most vulnerable.

In summary, NACDS is deeply concerned about the potential loss of care access for the American people that could result due to insufficient COVID-19 funding. We stand ready to support the Administration and Congress as we request your bipartisan, bicameral, and cross-branch collaboration in helping to preserve critical access to care by allocating funds to maintain the HRSA Uninsured Program, CAF Program, testing programs, and other essential COVID-19 care programs for COVID-19 vaccinations, testing, and treatment. For questions or further discussion, please contact NACDS' Chris Krese, Senior Vice President, Congressional Relations & Communications at ckrese@nacds.org or 703-837.4650 and Sara Roszak, Senior Vice President of Health and Wellness Strategy and Policy at sroszak@NACDS.org or 703-837-4251.

Sincerely,



Steven C. Anderson, FASAE, CAE, IOM
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Chain Drug Stores

Cc: Mr. Jeffrey Zients
COVID-19 Response Team Coordinator

Dr. Ashish Jha
Incoming COVID-19 Response Team Coordinator

⁶ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/15/fact-sheet-consequences-of-lack-of-funding-for-efforts-to-combat-covid-19-if-congress-does-not-act/>

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NACDS represents traditional drug stores, supermarkets and mass merchants with pharmacies. Chains operate over 40,000 pharmacies, and NACDS' over 80 chain member companies include regional chains, with a minimum of four stores, and national companies. Chains employ nearly 3 million individuals, including 155,000 pharmacists. They fill over 3 billion prescriptions yearly, and help patients use medicines correctly and safely, while offering innovative services that improve patient health and healthcare affordability. NACDS members also include more than 900 supplier partners and over 70 international members representing 21 countries. Please visit [NACDS.org](https://www.nacds.org).



March 17, 2022

The Hon. Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Critical funding needed to sustain necessary pandemic care to help prevent detrimental loss of access and backsliding on health equity

Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell,

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) writes to urge for collaboration across the Administration and Congress to ensure allocation of funding for the Uninsured Program administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Increasing Community Access to Testing (ICATT) program and the Community-Based Testing Sites (CBTS) program, the Coverage Assistance Fund (CAF), among other COVID-19 care programs.¹ These essential programs promote equitable vaccination, testing, and treatment access for the public, including vulnerable, uninsured Americans. Any premature lapse in funding that splinters care access threatens to disintegrate the robust, equity-driven COVID-19 pandemic response that has so far saved more than a million lives.²

Through the ICATT and CBTS programs, for example, pharmacies among other healthcare providers, continue to offer expanded access to needed COVID-19 testing in communities across the country. Pharmacies help provide more than 20,000 COVID-19 testing sites nationwide, including state and federal programs, and 70% of such sites are in areas with moderate to severe social vulnerability.^{3,4} Community-based testing programs have administered millions of COVID-19 tests, and uninterrupted testing access for the American people remains critical to the nation's ongoing response efforts.

Additionally, through the Uninsured Program, healthcare providers, including pharmacies, community clinics, and hospitals, have been able to help meaningfully improve and sustain access for uninsured populations to receive essential COVID-19-related care. For example, pharmacies have been able to provide more than 11 million COVID-19 vaccinations to uninsured individuals through this program.⁵

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The loss of access, as a result of expiring COVID-19 care programs, could undermine the nation's broader, comprehensive response efforts, and NACDS agrees that inaction at this pivotal time could set the nation back, leave the nation less prepared, and may cost the nation more lives.⁶ We understand the American people are ready to leave the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the past and move forward with optimism. However, doing so without maintaining the necessary readiness increases undue risk for the nation. Unresolved challenges and uncertainties related to COVID-19 still require attention, including the potential for another surge, emergence of new variants of concern, inconsistent vaccination rates across the country, and disproportionately high risks for certain, vulnerable populations. Therefore, this reallocation of funding to maintain COVID-19 care programs is essential for the nation to continue mounting a sustained pandemic response that effectively prioritizes the health and wellbeing of the American people – including the most vulnerable.

In summary, NACDS is deeply concerned about the potential loss of care access for the American people that could result due to insufficient COVID-19 funding. We stand ready to support the Administration and Congress as we request your bipartisan, bicameral, and cross-branch collaboration in helping to preserve critical access to care by allocating funds to maintain the HRSA Uninsured Program, CAF Program, testing programs, and other essential COVID-19 care programs for COVID-19 vaccinations, testing, and treatment. For questions or further discussion, please contact NACDS' Chris Krese, Senior Vice President, Congressional Relations & Communications at ckrese@nacds.org or 703-837.4650 and Sara Roszak, Senior Vice President of Health and Wellness Strategy and Policy at sroszak@NACDS.org or 703-837-4251.

Sincerely,



Steven C. Anderson, FASAE, CAE, IOM
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Chain Drug Stores

Cc: The Hon. Patrick Leahy
Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Hon. Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Hon. Patty Murray

⁶ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/15/fact-sheet-consequences-of-lack-of-funding-for-efforts-to-combat-covid-19-if-congress-does-not-act/>

Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

The Hon. Richard Burr
Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

The Hon. Ron Wyden
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee

The Hon. Mike Crapo
Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee

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March 17, 2022

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Critical funding needed to sustain necessary pandemic care to help prevent detrimental loss of access and backsliding on health equity

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

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Sincerely,



Steven C. Anderson, FASAE, CAE, IOM
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Chain Drug Stores

Cc: The Hon. Rosa L. DeLauro
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

The Hon. Kay Granger
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations

The Hon. Frank Pallone

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Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Hon. Cathy McMorris Rodgers

Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce

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