May 2, 2024

The Honorable Xavier Becerra Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

We are heartened by the recent news that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to Pemgarga, a new Monoclonal antibody (mAB) treatment. This marks a significant advancement in our ongoing battle against COVID-19. We extend our gratitude for the administration’s dedication to advancing this vital prevention and treatment option and urge its swift introduction and integration into the marketplace.

While Pemgarga’s approval represents a crucial milestone, it is just one facet of our broader challenge. The availability of safe and effective medicine on the market can only truly benefit those in need if it is accessible and affordable. As a coalition encompassing minority health organizations, labor unions, and consumer advocates, we emphasize ensuring the accessibility and affordability of all safe and effective COVID-19 prevention and treatment options for every American.

We commend your past efforts in advocating for increased access to affordable life-saving medications, notably demonstrated by your September 2023 letter to healthcare payers urging coverage of the updated COVID-19 vaccines without cost-sharing. We strongly encourage you to extend similar guidance for Pemgarga and all approved COVID-19 therapies.

Despite the efficacy of existing COVID-19 therapies, relying solely on antivirals and vaccines falls short of safeguarding the estimated seven million immunocompromised individuals in the U.S. As you are aware, these vulnerable patients—especially those facing barriers to accessing or affording newly approved medications and therapies—do not reap the same benefits from antivirals and vaccines as individuals with healthy immune systems.

Your September letter underscored the paramount importance of reducing barriers to coverage and urged consideration of all avenues to achieve this goal. We urge you to apply this same urgency to all COVID-19 therapies. Building upon your call to ensure equitable access to all safe and effective treatments, including mABs, is imperative.

In closing, we appeal to your continued leadership and advocacy to prioritize the accessibility and affordability of safe and effective COVID-19 therapies for all Americans. By working together, we can ensure that no individual is left behind in our collective efforts to overcome this pandemic.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Elena Rios, MD, MSPH, MACP
President & CEO
A. Phillip Randolph Institute
Asian & Pacific Islander American Forum
Alliance for Retired Americans
Black Women's Health Imperative
Consumer Action
Egality Science
Hispanic Federation
Latin Council for Latin American Advancement
Latino Caucus for Public Health
Latinx Medical and Health Society
Long Covid Alliance
Long Covid Families
Long Covid Justice
National Association of Latino Healthcare Executives
National Consumers League
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
National Latino Behavioral Health Association (new)
Rare Disease Diversity Coalition
The Dick Gregory Society
The Latino Coalition