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Celebrating a New Day in America and New Opportunity for Our Nation's Community Health Centers

Today, we celebrate the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States of America, Joseph R. Biden and his history-making Vice President, Kamala Harris, the first woman to ever hold the office. We offer our most sincere congratulations and best wishes as these two leaders work to unify a divided country during one of the most tumultuous moments in our history.

Despite the chaotic events that have unfolded over the past year, today we celebrate a new day in America. A new administration gives our nation the opportunity to reset, re-examine priorities, and chart a new course into the future. This is especially true when it comes to our national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, the President-Elect gave America's Community Health Centers a good reason to feel optimistic for the future.

In an address to the nation, President-Elect Biden proposed the expansion of Community Health Centers to fight health disparities in the COVID-19 pandemic. Declaring that "equity is essential to our COVID response," Biden detailed a five-point plan that focuses on providing COVID-19 vaccinations in marginalized, medically underserved communities. Among the highlights of the plan are mobilizing federally supported vaccination sites across the country, invoking the Defense Production Act to boost vaccine supply, and surging the public health force.

"Within the first month of our Administration, we are going to deploy mobile clinics, moving from community to community, that will partner with Community Health Centers and local primary care doctors to offer vaccines to hard-hit and hard-to-reach communities," said Biden.

We could not agree more with this all-hands-on-deck approach! It is obvious that President-Elect Biden fully understands the importance of America's Health Center Program and the value our network brings to the COVID-19 response.

Here in Louisiana, Community Health Centers have served on the frontlines battling COVID-19 since day one. Now, as life-saving vaccines are being distributed, Community Health Centers must be made a greater priority and be treated as essential partners if we are going to put an end to this deadly pandemic. Our members have the human resources, facilities, and the expertise required to pull off a vaccination effort of this size and scale. Their experience in drive thru COVID-19 testing and their know-how in conducting effective outreach, makes Community Health Centers the most obvious and optimal partners to engage in this massive response.

Over the past ten months, 400,000 Americans (including over 8,300 Louisianans) have lost their lives to this terrible virus. Of course, these numbers represent more than just statistics on a graph – each one of these numbers represents a family member, friend, or neighbor lost to COVID-19 – plus countless loved ones dealing with unimaginable grief.

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We are grateful for the confidence that the new administration has in America's Community Health Centers. We know that here in Louisiana, our members are excited for the opportunity to take a more active role in the pandemic response and in ensuring that ALL Louisianans have access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Of course, there will eventually be a post-COVID-19 and our members are ready for that too. We reaffirm our commitment and strengthen our resolve to work with all elected officials in ensuring that we guarantee a more equitable and affordable healthcare system for every citizen – no matter their income, their race, or where they live.

Even in these uncertain and divided times, we firmly believe America's best days are ahead.

May God bless and guide this new administration, the new Congress, and all our elected officials across the country. As with any new incoming administration, their success or failure is America's success or failure. During this unprecedented time, the stakes could not be higher.

About the Louisiana Primary Care Association

The Louisiana Primary Care Association (LPCA) represents 39 federally funded, private, non-profit and public Community Health Centers (and 3 Look-Alikes) across Louisiana that serve over 465,000 patients annually. LPCA promotes community-based health services through advocacy, education, and collaboration with community partners. Our goal is to ensure that every Louisianan has access to affordable, quality, primary care services. For more information, visit www.LPCA.net.