

CANCER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

April 1, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned organizations represent cancer patients, physicians and other health care professionals, researchers, and caregivers. We are writing to urge immediate Congressional action to approve additional resources for the nation's COVID-19 response.

We commend your leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, including providing federal funds for the multi-faceted federal response to COVID-19. It has been a difficult two years for the nation, with staggering illness and heart-breaking deaths for many families and disruptions of daily life, family life, work, and education experienced by all. We are gratified that COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are declining in all areas of the country, and that our lives have resumed in many important ways.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over for many cancer patients, including those who are immune compromised because of their disease or their treatment. These cancer patients have taken extraordinary precautions to avoid COVID-19 infection, including vaccination (and an extra vaccine dose recommended for the immune-compromised), masking, and social distancing. Although many immune compromised cancer patients are vaccinated, they do not have a robust response to vaccines and must essentially live their lives as if they are not vaccinated.

As a result of the impressive innovations of the biopharmaceutical industry, there are additional tools that can be used by the immune compromised. Certain monoclonal antibodies can be used as a prophylaxis against COVID-19, and antiviral treatments are an important tool for those who do become infected with COVID-19. These products have been in short supply since authorized for use, and we understand that those supplies will dwindle further without additional federal funds to purchase them. In addition, rapid, high-quality testing is still needed

to identify patients eligible for therapy and ensure that patients are receiving the most appropriate care for their clinical circumstances.

Please act immediately to ensure that cancer patients and other immune compromised individuals have access to tests, vaccines, monoclonal antibodies, antiviral therapies, and other tools to identify, prevent or treat COVID-19 infections. More federal funds are the key to protecting access for the immune compromised, for whom the pandemic may never be over. We also urge that funds remain available for a strong public health response to the pandemic. That response must include clear communication to immune compromised individuals to help them manage the risks of COVID-19 and clear communication to the public regarding the vulnerabilities and needs of immune compromised cancer patients and other Americans who are immune compromised.

We look forward to prompt Congressional action to help cancer patients and other immune compromised individuals who are still living through a pandemic.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

Academy of Oncology Nurse & Patient Navigators
American Society for Radiation Oncology
Association for Molecular Pathology
Association of Oncology Social Work
CancerCare
Cancer Support Community
Children's Cancer Cause
College of American Pathologists
Family Reach
International Myeloma Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
LUNgevity Foundation
Lymphoma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance
Susan G. Komen