



National Rural Health Association

October 28, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Dr. Nunez-Smith,

On behalf of the National Rural Health Association, I want to express our sincere gratitude to you and the members of the Biden-Harris COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force for your work on identifying and eliminating health and social disparities related to COVID-19.

NRHA is a non-profit membership organization with more than 21,000 members nationwide that provides leadership on rural health issues. Our membership includes nearly every component of rural America's health care infrastructure, including rural community hospitals, critical access hospitals, doctors, nurses, and patients. We work to improve rural America's health needs through advocacy, communications, education, and research.

Nationwide, but particularly in rural America, the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged communities. Rural residents bore a disproportionate burden from the pandemic, most notably in terms of per capita case and death rates. We know that the pandemic will have long-lasting effects on overall health and well-being for rural residents. NRHA supports the Task Force's vision for achieving investments related to a data ecosystem, empowering community-led solutions, developing a representative health care workforce, and increasing equitable access to health for all.

NRHA celebrates the important recommendations the Task Force has prepared for the White House to improve COVID-19 health equity. In particular, we applaud the swiftness of your efforts, preparing thoughtful, impactful recommendations in less than one year. The Task Force's final report lifts up efforts that will mitigate health inequities caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent such inequities in future pandemics in rural communities, including:

- Increasing affordable access to broadband, as functional broadband is critical to health and economies in rural areas and critical to the success of telehealth for rural residents.
- Standardizing demographic and socioeconomic categories in data and support equity-centered data collection, especially that which is inclusive of geographic disparity.
- Investing in a diverse rural workforce, acknowledging the importance of a workforce reflective of the population it serves, to ensure equitable health care access.

We understand that addressing the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for future pandemics will require a multifaceted, all-of-government approach. NRHA looks forward to working with the Biden-Harris Administration to assist rural parts of our country with implementing these solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Morgan".

Alan Morgan
Chief Executive Officer
National Rural Health Association