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February 1, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

On behalf of AMGA, I would like to congratulate you on your election to the Office of the President of the United States. As you assume the responsibilities of the presidency, please know that AMGA and its membership stand ready to serve as a resource and partner in the ongoing efforts to control and ultimately prevail over the COVID-19 pandemic. Founded in 1950, AMGA represents more than 440 multispecialty medical groups and integrated delivery systems, representing about 175,000 physicians who care for one in three Americans. I would like to offer our assistance and experience to help you achieve your goal of vaccinating 100 million Americans in your first 100 days in office.

Your recently unveiled National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness represents a sound approach to vaccine distribution. However, AMGA recommends that the distribution strategy also enlist medical group practices, who already have the infrastructure, experience, and relationships that are vital to vaccinating patients quickly. The National Strategy's first goal is to "restore trust with the American people." While it is unfortunate that incorrect information is circulating about the virus and the vaccine, AMGA members can help educate patients by serving as a point of contact as part of the vaccine distribution process. This is critically important, as recent survey data from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that people ages 65 and older say they do not have enough information about when (58%) and where (59%) they will be able to get vaccinated.¹ Our patients know us and trust us. AMGA members can provide the needed education and are prepared to leverage the trust and goodwill they have built with their patients to meet your strategy's second goal of executing a "safe, effective, comprehensive vaccination campaign."

¹ Hamel, L., Kirzinger, A., Lopes, L., et. al. "KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor: January 2021." https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/report/kff-covid-19-vaccine-monitor-january-2021/?utm_campaign=KFF-2021-polling-surveys&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=107569995&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8hNpGFIFunEDE3gLkVx9xdlMI8G3BJKS64IDo7PqgdJmxHU08vOzAdRzRyEWOgEeYMyEmV_vqIUC6D1Od6c_apS5qPEkw&utm_content=107569995&utm_source=hs_email

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates about 38 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been provided. In total, 17.5 million doses have been administered; approximately 15.1 million Americans have received at least one dose and 2.4 million have received two doses. Vaccinating 100 million people in 100 days requires a daily rate of 1 million vaccinations, and you recently increased your goal to 1.5 million vaccinations a day. CDC data indicate currently about 940,000 doses per day are being administered. I am confident that we can increase that daily rate and achieve the 100 million goal, but only provided the vaccination plan utilizes an as-of-yet untapped resource: medical group practices and their teams of physicians and providers who routinely provide vaccinations to their patients.

AMGA appreciates and welcomes your administration taking a more active role in distributing the vaccine. Your plan involves establishing thousands of community vaccination centers and mobile units to serve rural and underserved areas. While such distribution centers are an important aspect of a distribution strategy, AMGA strongly recommends that the vaccination strategy enlist medical group practices. Our members, who are on the front lines of the fight against COVID every day, have relationships in communities throughout the country with patients in need of vaccination. With more than 175,000 physicians, and even more clinicians and other healthcare practitioners, our provider organizations have the reach and experience to vaccinate a large number of patients quickly. While this disease is new, our vaccination strategy can build on the experience AMGA members have in routinely providing vaccines. With proven structures and processes in place, our members are situated to achieve the best possible outcomes. For example, as part of an AMGA's Best Practice Collaborative on Adult Immunization, we provided our members with a roadmap for successful immunization efforts for pneumonia and influenza. This effort helped our members document and administer more than 5 million doses of influenza and pneumococcal vaccines.

Every dose provided in one of our members' offices means one fewer person in line at a community vaccination center.

Given the vaccines require a second dose, our established relationships with our patients will facilitate the scheduling, care management, and documentation needed to ensure patients adhere to the vaccine protocols. AMGA member practices have the infrastructure needed to schedule appointments so that patients can remain at home until their appointment rather than waiting in line at a vaccination center. Our electronic medical records can identify and alert providers to which patients are eligible for vaccination. Then, it will trigger an alert so case managers can follow up with patients and ensure they receive a second dose at the appropriate time. Relying on group practices to schedule appointments will relieve some of the responsibility from county health departments or other community vaccination efforts for tracking patients. In addition, rather than require patients to navigate an unfamiliar state or county website, or travel to a new location, patients can contact their trusted clinicians to schedule an appointment at the appropriate time and in their usual care setting. Even more importantly, our providers have the ability to reach out to patients and contact them.

As additional supplies of vaccine become available, coordinating with group practices will be an important aspect of the distribution effort. Our members have the storage and staffing requirements necessary for the vaccine, but practices should be notified three to four weeks in advance of the number of doses they will receive. This will allow our members to plan vaccination clinics at their facilities.

Providing medical groups access to the vaccine also will allow our medical providers to begin to resume regular operations. Delayed and deferred care is a serious matter. By running a vaccination clinic in a medical group's office, as is commonly done, patients also will benefit by having the opportunity speak with their providers about other healthcare concerns. Follow-up care can then easily be scheduled and provided.

AMGA members are accustomed to providing a number of vaccines to our patients. Their experience with seasonal, high-volume influenza vaccination, along with other routine vaccinations, is a resource that is ready to serve our communities. With a dedicated supply of vaccine and support, including the necessary financial support for staff, tents, and the other logistical needs to manage vaccine operations, medical groups are well positioned to quickly help you reach your vaccination goals.

I am confident that with your leadership and the on-the-ground experience of our members, we can increase the daily number of vaccines provided, track patients who need a second dose, and vaccinate our fellow Americans so we can achieve a victory over COVID-19.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. If we can provide you with any more information, please feel free to contact me or AMGA's Chief Policy Officer Chet Speed at cspeed@amga.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerry Penso".

Jerry Penso, M.D., M.B.A.
President and Chief Executive Officer
AMGA