

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

December 21, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, we write to you to urge the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to help close the health disparities in cancer care among communities of color through early testing. Presently, there is a lifesaving multi-cancer early detection (MCED) test that can screen for over fifty cancers but is currently only available to patients who can afford to pay almost \$1,000 for the test out of pocket. As communities of color bear the disproportionate burden of cancer, we are hopeful your Department can help facilitate increased access to this groundbreaking test for everyone.

According to the American Cancer Society, African Americans have the highest death rate and shortest survival of any racial/ethnic group for most cancers in the United States. Having just observed Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we are troubled by statistics that show Latina women are measurably more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer at an advanced stage than white women. Where heart disease is the leading killer of most ethnic communities, cancer is the leading cause of death for Asian Americans.

There is no greater tool in fighting cancer than early detection. As we have seen with the few cancers that do have widely available early detection tests—like cervical, breast, prostate, and colorectal cancers—early detection identifies cancers while still local and potentially curable. Early detection saves lives, yet underrepresented groups and communities of color often do not have the same access to early detection as others. This is a critical health equity issue, and we are asking HHS to help close the gap in access.

MCED testing has been broadly described as a “game-changer.” Indeed, the one test currently on the market has the ability to detect over fifty cancers through a single blood draw, and other tests will likely become available in the coming years. President Biden’s 2020 campaign promise to cure cancer is within reach with early detection, but other regulatory bodies have been erecting barriers to widespread access to current testing options by focusing primarily on issues unrelated to health care and health disparities. Our communities do not have the luxury of waiting for economic theories to be debated while we die preventable deaths. We commend the President’s commitment to investing \$200 million in genomic testing as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and are turning to you in hopes of refocusing the discussion on how to get

MCED testing to as broad a universe as possible, as soon as possible, regardless of race or socioeconomic status.

We look forward to working with you to achieve this critical goal.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

Colin Allred  
Member of Congress

Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

Andre Carson  
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Joaquin Castro  
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Henry Cuellar  
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Adriano Espaillat  
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Sylvia R. Garcia  
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Vicente Gonzalez  
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Jahana Hayes  
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Sheila Jackson Lee  
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Pete Aguilar  
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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
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Ami Bera, M.D.  
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Troy A. Carter  
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Veronica Escobar  
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Jesús G. “Chuy” García  
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Jimmy Gomez  
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Al Green  
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Steven Horsford  
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Sara Jacobs  
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Thomas R. Suozzi  
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