

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Testimony before the
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies

Hearing Titled
U.S. Role in Global COVID-19 Vaccine Equity

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Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, distinguished Members of the Committee, I am Dr. David Kessler, and I am honored to be serving as the Chief Scientific Officer for the COVID-19 Response. Thank you for having me and for the opportunity to testify before you today, provide this update, and discuss our planned actions and priorities going forward as they relate to the global COVID response.

It is important for Members of this Committee to know that today, there is one COVID-19 Response team that is coordinated throughout all levels of government. We are all part of that team. I have a long history of government service and I can tell you that the COVID-19 domestic and international response is an extraordinary level of coordination, focus, and commitment across our government and the globe.

Before diving into the topic of this hearing, I want to acknowledge up front the important work that was done to bring a vaccine to the American people in record time. Today, the United States is in a special position, with three vaccines authorized or approved for the prevention of COVID-19. I am pleased to report that, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we have reached 80 percent vaccination levels of at least one dose for people 18 and older and 69 percent vaccination levels for fully dosed persons in this age group.

As we advance new plans to deliver vaccines and therapeutics not only to Americans but also around the world, I have the great privilege of working closely with my colleagues from the Department of Health and Human Services, Director Pace and Doctor Disbrow, who are also appearing before you today.

President Biden and Secretary Becerra have made ending the global COVID-19 pandemic our number one priority. We know that this virus has no borders. Vaccinating Americans and vaccinating people around the world is not a choice. It's an imperative. That's why the US government is doing both.

The President set forth global targets at the Global COVID-19 Summit earlier this year and called on partners to assist with addressing COVID-19 around the world. The United States by far is leading the effort to vaccinate the world. We have proudly donated more doses than all other countries combined. We will continue to donate more and more doses.

While ambitious, the President's global vaccine targets are what we need to get on course for ending this pandemic and with it, the risk it imposes on our countries, communities, health and livelihoods. Led by the U.S., the global community aims to fully vaccinate 70% of the global population with safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. 5.6 billion doses would be required for 70% coverage in these low and lower-middle income countries, of which 2 billion have already been administered. The time is now to vaccinate the world and save lives To defeat the COVID-19 pandemic, we must work together in pursuit of a shared vision.

Today, I am here to share with you the latest information on vaccine purchase contracts and donations and to discuss some of the global challenges we need to address.

As stated in my opening, the United States has donated more vaccines than all other countries combined. We're donating 1.2 billion doses to the world. This includes the US government's groundbreaking deal to deliver 1 billion donated doses of Pfizer vaccine to countries in need through COVAX. More than 240 million donate doses have already shipped to 108 countries. For every 1 shot we have put into the arm of an American, we are now donating about 3 shots

globally. And we continue to encourage our international partners to share more doses and expedite the delivery of those already committed

I want to be clear that I personally continue to engage vaccine manufacturers to increase production and availability of vaccines for low- and low-middle income countries.

As part of those conversations, we negotiated a deal with Moderna and the African Union (AU) where the United States defers deliveries of 33 million doses, allowing the AU to buy up to 110 million Moderna vaccines at a reduced rate negotiated by the U.S. We also broke through a logjam and brokered a deal between Moderna and COVAX, enabling the two parties to reach an agreement where COVAX will purchase, to date, 56 million doses of Moderna vaccine. Moderna is also retroactively discounting doses already sold to COVAX – all because of USG intervention. We expect that number will increase in the next few weeks. And, under the leadership of President Biden and Secretary Becerra, we continue to scale manufacturing, and invest in vaccines abroad.

Specifically, we have been supporting this expansion with:

- Our Quad partnership with India, Australia, and Japan which is on track to produce at least 1 billion vaccine doses by the end of 2022.
- Our work to expand vaccine manufacturing in South Africa to produce more than 500 million single-dose regimens in Africa for Africa.
- We continue expanding the existing manufacturing footprint at Pfizer; forging novel partnerships like the J&J/Merck marriage. This will result in billions of doses.

- We invested \$2.7 billion of the funding in manufacturing of critical inputs for the vaccine production process and for expanded fill finish lines at factories.
- Our support for an intellectual property waiver.

Additionally, the United States has worked to get doses into arms of some of the world's most vulnerable people. The USG brokered a historic deal with J&J and COVAX to facilitate the first ever delivery of COVID-19 vaccine to people in conflict zones and other humanitarian settings that cannot be reached by government vaccination campaigns. The USG and COVAX worked with J&J to waive liability for doses, pioneering a novel legal approach that will allow COVAX to give donated doses to NGOs to administer to people in conflict zones and other humanitarian settings. The U.S. also negotiated a pathbreaking deal to make 300,000 doses of J&J available to humanitarian workers around the world.

As the Biden Administration continues this critical work, we also need the world to do more. We need every other country to step up against a virus like the United States has.

I look forward to working with Members of this Committee as we address the issues I have highlighted. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on our recent global COVID-19 Response actions.