

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to you today to discuss your decision to distribute 500 million vaccines to help foreign nations combat the spread of COVID-19. While we are pleased to see the Administration's efforts to support global public health, we would like to ensure these vaccines are equitably distributed once they are sent abroad. We are particularly concerned that the LGBTQI+ community may be unjustly excluded from receiving vaccines in various countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed inequity in health care systems around the world for many marginalized groups, especially the LGBTQI+ community. Due to stigma, violence, and discrimination, LGBTQI+ people—and transgender and nonbinary individuals, in particular—face additional barriers to accessing relief and health care services. In addition to non-inclusive approaches to distributing relief, unsafe distribution centers and anti-LGBTQI+ sentiments and/or rhetoric of relief workers may also prevent LGBTQI+ individuals from obtaining vaccines.

The distribution of vaccines through national identification systems may also serve as a barrier for transgender individuals. In many foreign countries, this population may lack the documentation necessary to receive an identity card, may hold an identity card that does not correspond with their gender, or may live in a nation that has recently reversed or banned legal gender recognition.

Throughout the world, anti-LGBTQI+ bias has grown significantly in response to the pandemic. In Ukraine, leaders in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church blamed the outbreak of the pandemic on homosexuality. In Panama, police and private security enforced a gender-based quarantine, specifically targeting transgender individuals. In Uganda, police utilized dubious charges of breaking COVID restrictions to detain LGBTQI+ homeless youth. In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orban abused his emergency powers, afforded to him to fight the pandemic, to push through dangerous legislation targeting transgender individuals. In the Philippines, law enforcement officials utilized their broad pandemic authorities to physically humiliate LGBTQI+ individuals, while others in the community have been denied food aid because their families did not conform to heterosexual standards created by local governments.

These are just a sample of the countless instances where those in the LGBTQI+ community have been unjustly discriminated against because of their gender identity and expression, sexual orientation or whom they love. As the entire world focuses on trying to return to some normalcy, we must ensure those who have been marginalized are afforded the same opportunities and resources to resume their lives.

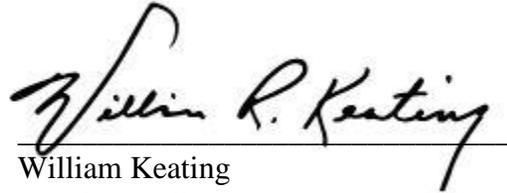
We appreciate your long record of promoting LGBTQI+ rights around the world. We hope that as the United States finalizes agreements for vaccine donations to countries, your administration will ensure that governments receiving vaccine doses from the United States will equitably distribute them to their residents regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Dina Titus
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William R. Keating", written over a horizontal line.

William Keating
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David N. Cicilline", written over a horizontal line.

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Theodore Deutch", written over a horizontal line.

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress