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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

As the United States overcomes the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), continues to invest in new research focused on COVID-19 therapeutics. As you know, Congress first allocated supplemental funds to BARDA in the CARES Act,¹ and most recently provided an additional \$6.05 billion to the Agency in the American Rescue Plan Act.² An unnamed HHS spokesperson was recently quoted as saying, “[t]herapeutics are an important element of the COVID-19 response, and we are focused on the programs currently underway and/or in negotiation using the funds available to us.”³ Given that billions of dollars have been appropriated by Congress to BARDA during the last year, including the \$6.05 billion made available less than three months ago, we are concerned about reports that indicate no new therapeutic candidates will be evaluated by the Agency. Further, the recently released American Rescue Plan Act Spend Plan references completing therapeutics-related activities but makes no indication that the Agency will enter into agreements to review new therapeutics. We sincerely hope that is not the case.

In order for the United States to remain resilient against COVID-19 with respect to variants and uncertainty regarding length of immunity from vaccination, we must have versatile options to combat the disease and prevent hospitalizations and deaths. The development of COVID-19 therapeutics will be key in the continued response to this virus, as well as for

¹ P.L. 116-136

² P.L. 117-2

³ Brennan, Zachary. “BARDA slows its \$9B engine for new Covid-19 therapeutics.” *Endpoints News*, 17 May 2021. <https://endpts.com/barda-slows-its-9b-engine-for-new-covid-19-therapeutics/>

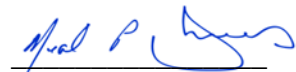
preparing the country to combat future viruses or similar pandemics. It would be irresponsible to stop investing in next generation therapeutics or abandon efforts to evaluate the efficacy of existing therapies against COVID-19. The failure of 4 of the 13 therapeutic candidates that BARDA has invested in to-date further highlights the need for robust research into alternative therapeutic candidates.⁴ According to the Biotechnology Innovation Organization, there are over 600 antivirals and treatments in the pipeline, and most of them in the United States.⁵ We strongly encourage HHS to use the funds available to them through the American Rescue Plan Act and otherwise to pursue vigorous research that will deliver more therapeutic options for the American people.

We respectfully request that you respond to the following in detail:

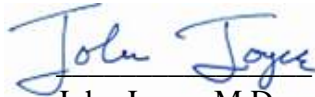
1. What is the status of funding at BARDA for new therapeutic projects?
2. How does the administration plan to support COVID-19 therapeutic products moving forward?
3. Please elaborate on how the \$5.2 billion planned for vaccine and therapeutic activities, as referenced in the American Rescue Plan Act Spend Plan, will be used to support therapeutics research.
4. Please provide details on how the remaining \$850,000,000 allocated by Section 2303 of the American Rescue Plan Act will be spent.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact our office if we may be of any assistance.

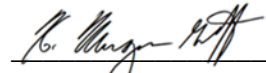
Sincerely,



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



John Joyce, M.D.
Member of Congress



H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

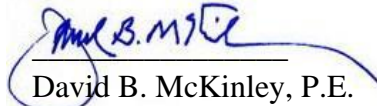
⁴ "BARDA's Expanding COVID-19 Medical Countermeasures Portfolio."

<https://www.medicalcountermeasures.gov/app/barda/coronavirus/COVID19.aspx?filter=therapeutic>

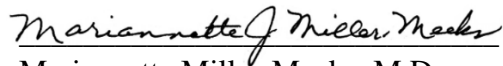
⁵ "COVID-19 Therapeutic Development Tracker" *BIO*. <https://www.bio.org/policy/human-health/vaccines-biodefense/coronavirus/pipeline-tracker>



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



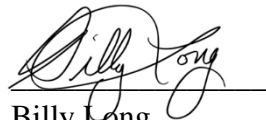
Mike Kelly
Member of Congress



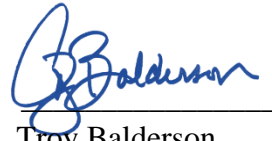
Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress



Billy Long
Member of Congress



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



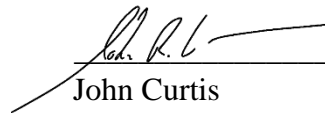
Brad Wenstrup, D.P.M.
Member of Congress



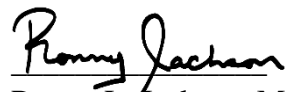
Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress



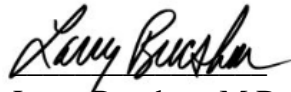
Jeff Van Drew, DMD
Member of Congress



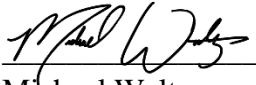
John Curtis
Member of Congress



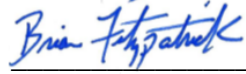
Ronny L. Jackson, M.D.
Member of Congress



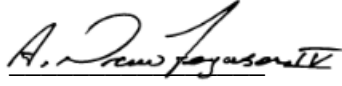
Larry Bucshon, M.D.
Member of Congress



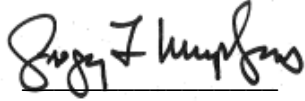
Michael Waltz
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



A. Drew Ferguson, IV
Member of Congress



Gregory F. Murphy, M.D.
Member of Congress



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress