Dear Dr. Walensky, Dr. Remley, and Dr. Messonier,

Our collective organizations sincerely appreciate the tireless and selfless work from everyone at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention during the ongoing worldwide novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) derived health crisis. Our organizations share the commitment of ensuring that vaccine allocation frameworks are designed to protect the most vulnerable and prioritize those persons at highest risk of death from COVID-19. Research continues to show that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are at high risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19 and are being overlooked in vaccination allocation frameworks. While some states have made all people with IDD a part of Phase 1 vaccination priority groups, others have not. Our collective organizations urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to amend its vaccination guidelines to also include people with IDD living in other than group residential facilities as Phase 1B vaccination priority (including those living with family or on their own).

In the initial phase of vaccine allocation, many high-risk individuals have already been offered the opportunity to be vaccinated, including older adults, persons living in congregate settings, and staff at care facilities. Fortunately, most if not all state vaccination frameworks have included individuals with IDD who live in congregate settings and care staff (direct support professionals - DSPs) in this phase. Such individuals with IDD who live in congregate settings and DSPs should be offered vaccination opportunities as soon as possible -- if they have not been already. Data from other countries, as well as investigative reporting in the United States, suggest that the percentage of COVID-19 deaths in long-term care facilities...
may be higher than indicated by the CDC database.\textsuperscript{1,2}

Individuals with IDD are at significantly higher risk compared to the general population, regardless of their living situation. Complications from and death rates due to COVID-19 for people with IDD are disproportionately higher when compared to people without IDD.\textsuperscript{3,4} Mortality rates have been cited to be up to 15\% in individuals with IDD.\textsuperscript{5,6,7} Further, there is an estimated four-fold increase in risk for COVID related hospitalization and ten-fold increase in COVID-19 related death in individuals with Down syndrome specifically. In addition, those adults with IDD and specifically with Down syndrome and diagnosed with dementia have also shown increased morbidity and mortality.\textsuperscript{8} Thus, we believe that at-risk individuals with IDD must be prioritized explicitly along with other high-risk diagnoses.

Currently, there is significant variability in how individuals with IDD are prioritized in vaccine allocation frameworks. We ask that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide a centralized framework for vaccine allocation with clear guidelines regarding risk that includes adults with IDD. After frontline healthcare workers (including DSPs), individuals should be prioritized for vaccination based on risk of severe complication or death from COVID-19 rather than solely on occupation or location of residence in order to protect the most vulnerable, including those with IDD.

\textsuperscript{1} Bondy H. 39\% of Covid-19 deaths have occurred in nursing homes — many could have been prevented: report. [December 8, 2020]. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/know-your-value/feature/39-covid-19-deaths-have-occurred-nursing-homes-many-could-ncna1250374
\textsuperscript{7} Landes SD, Turk MA, Formica MK, McDonald KE, Stevens JD. COVID-19 outcomes among people with intellectual and developmental disability living in residential group homes in New York State. Disability and Health Journal, 2020, 100969.
The framework from the commonwealth of Pennsylvania provides an example of prioritization largely based on risk of death and explicitly includes Down syndrome as a high-risk condition. We are encouraged by the CDC’s classifying Down syndrome as a high-risk condition and suggest that this type of framework be used, although should include all IDD diagnoses in a high risk category. Specifically, we recommend that all at-risk adults with IDD be prioritized in phase 1B of the CDC vaccine phased allocation.

We appreciate your ongoing work on behalf of our nation and careful consideration of all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Sincerely,

Emily Johnson, MD
VP Policy and Advocacy
Allen Wong, DDS, EdD, DABSCD
President
American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry

Maria Stanley, MD
President
Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group

Seth Keller, MD
Matthew Janicki, PhD
Co-presidents
National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia Practices

Terry R. Farmer
President/CEO
ACCSES

Gabrielle A. Carlson, MD
President
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Barbara Merrill
CEO
American Network of Community Options and Resources

Margaret Nygren, EdD
Executive Director and CEO
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Christopher S. Banks
President and CEO
Autism Society of America

Kara Ayers, PhD
Center For Dignity in Healthcare for People with Disabilities

Joseph Macbeth
President and CEO
National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals

Donna Meltzer
CEO
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

Ron Manderscheid, PhD
President/CEO,
NACBHDD - National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
NARMH - National Association for Rural Mental Health

Heather B. Sachs, J.D.
Policy & Advocacy Director
National Down Syndrome Congress

Kandi Pickard
President & CEO
National Down Syndrome Society

Steven Eidelman, MBA, MSW
National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities

Nina Bihani, MD
Co-Chair of Policy and Advocacy
Sibling Leadership Network

Tamara J. Wagester
Executive Director
AACPDM

Julie Ward
Senior Executive Officer for Public Policy
The Arc of the United States