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Asian Americans Advancing Justice |
AAJC

Interim President & CEO
Wade Henderson

February 22, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman, Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, Chair Murray, and Ranking Member Burr,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 31 undersigned organizations dedicated to the universal values of dignity, equity, justice, and inclusion in health care, write in strong support of the nomination of California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to be the next Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

In the midst of a pandemic that has compounded our preexisting public health crisis of structural racism and its resulting deep health inequities, it is imperative that the next leader of HHS be someone with a full understanding of how equity, justice, and health care are inextricably linked. Attorney General Becerra has consistently demonstrated that he is that person:

- During his time as a member of Congress, Attorney General Becerra served on the House Ways and Means Committee, where he developed deep expertise on the Affordable Care Act (ACA). His leadership in later defending the ACA against legal challenges is a key reason why the ACA, the greatest advance in access to health care for a generation, is still in effect.
- Becerra is committed to putting patients first, and as attorney general, has worked to ensure nondiscrimination protections in access to care, particularly for women, LGBTQ individuals, people of color, older adults, and individuals in rural and low-income communities. In addition, he has shown strong support for reproductive rights, including for access to birth control and abortion services.



- Becerra led the country in defending against the harmful Public Charge rule and attacks on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, showing his dedication to protecting the rights of immigrants and their families.
- Becerra has worked tirelessly to help ensure the availability of affordable prescription drugs, once again demonstrating his commitment to providing equitable access to care.
- As attorney general, Becerra established the Bureau of Disability Rights within the Civil Rights Enforcement Section of the California Department of Justice, the latest example in his long record of working for disability justice.
- Becerra's record also indicates that he would bring to the position a deep understanding of the ways in which access to social and economic opportunities and resources contribute to health and health outcomes. For example, Becerra has shown a deep commitment to ensuring fair housing, most recently opposing efforts to weaken federal protections against housing discrimination as well as efforts to cut off housing assistance eligibility, which threatened vulnerable families with eviction. He also established the Worker Rights and Fair Labor Section within the California Department of Justice to help protect the health, safety, and rights of working people, linking the creation of the new section to the urgent need to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on working people.

We cannot afford to have our next Secretary of Health and Human Services learning about our country's deepened health inequities on the job. Following the injustices and harms inflicted on some of our most vulnerable communities over the last four years, it is critical that the next Secretary of Health and Human Services be a person well-equipped to handle our country's deep health inequities. In order to emerge from this pandemic with healthier, stronger, more resilient communities, we need a Secretary of HHS who has fought for, and will prioritize health care access and equity for all people in America. For this reason, we urge you to support the confirmation of Attorney General Xavier Becerra to be the next Secretary of HHS.

If you have any questions, please contact Gaylynn Burroughs, senior policy counsel at The Leadership Conference, at burroughs@civilrights.org, or the co-chairs of The Leadership Conference Health Care Task Force: Sinsi Hernández-Cancio, vice president for health justice at the National Partnership for Women & Families at shc@nationalpartnership.org and Mara Youdelman, managing attorney at the National Health Law Program, at youdelman@healthlaw.org.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
National Health Law Program
National Partnership for Women & Families
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC



Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Equality California
Families USA
Family Equality
Feminist Majority Foundation
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
Justice in Aging
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
National Action Network
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Education Association
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Immigration Law Center
National Organization for Women
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Reproductive Health Access Project
SEIU
Silver State Equality-Nevada
The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)