



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

January 13, 2021

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Sir, Operation Warp Speed was a tremendous success, however our nation's actual COVID vaccine distribution has been wrought with failure. We can demonstrate successful distribution, leading by example, for our Veterans. About 20 million Americans are Veterans. VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) are modern, efficient, and strategically placed across the nation. Roughly 1,000 CBOCs. 20 million Veterans. Let's get it done.

Leveraging existing networks such as Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCF), outpatient clinics, public health clinics, and hospital systems, are key to vaccine distribution. However, I am concerned that we are missing an obvious opportunity to get vaccine access in front of our Vets. American VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics are next-generation medical facilities. They're amazing. Let's work together to get vaccine protocols in place at all 1,000 CBOCs. Louisiana is home to more than 280,000 veterans, with over 110,000 veterans being over the age of 65.

The States and local government entities are struggling with this mission. HHS/VA can lead from the front and demonstrate fast, efficient, modern vaccine distribution. A solid CBOC plan could have every single American Veteran vaccinated by the end of March. Medical professionals tell me that a modern CBOC can easily handle 400 vaccinations each day. In 60 days, every American Veteran that wants a vaccine could have one. Further, the VA and HHS would have fresh data on 20 million Veterans. Contact data, DD214, basic health assessment, etc.

I encourage you and Secretary Wilkie to work together on a plan/process to include Community-Based Outpatient Clinics in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution and outreach. The VA CBOCs are ready to perform and would not need to hire specific staff or require additional taxpayer dollars. All that would be needed is a plan and process to comply with the requirements of Operation Warp Speed. Additionally, VSOs can play a crucial role in the outreach as well.

Sir, this could work, and the 3rd District of Louisiana is more than happy to help set this plan up. Our district is home to two new CBOCs. But we can't do it without full support from you and Secretary Wilkie.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clay Higgins".

Clay Higgins
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Robert Wilkie
United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420