



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

CLARE E. CONNORS
ATTORNEY GENERAL

For Immediate Release
December 4, 2020

News Release 2020-103

Hawaii Attorney General Calls on Congress to Ensure Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccine

HONOLULU – Hawaii Attorney General Clare E. Connors joined a coalition of 13 state attorneys general to strongly urge Congress to allocate funding and codify coverage protections to guarantee that all people living in the United States are able to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine at no cost. Black, Latino, and Native Americans, and senior communities are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and are also more likely to be on Medicare, Medicaid, or uninsured. In the joint letter, the coalition calls on Congress to codify an interim rule providing the vaccine to Medicare recipients at no cost, to properly fund programs for the uninsured to cover administrative fees, and to increase financial support for Medicaid.

“The pandemic has had a devastating impact on life in our country” said Attorney General Connors. “As we implement response measures, equity must remain a guiding principle.”

Recent reports show that 16 percent of American adults are uninsured, 19 percent of Americans are insured under Medicare, and 21 percent of Americans are insured under Medicaid. Americans insured under Medicare, Medicaid, and those who are uninsured are more likely to be Americans of color, whose communities are hardest hit by the pandemic. For example, one-third of Black Americans are insured under Medicaid, and Latinos are three times more likely to be uninsured than their white counterparts. Black Americans experienced a significantly greater COVID-19 infection rate and three times higher mortality rate than their white counterparts, while Latinos have had nearly three times as many COVID-19 cases as their white counterparts, and have a significantly higher hospitalization rate. The joint letter issued today lays out three actions for Congress to take in order to ensure equitable access to the vaccines. First, Congress should codify the recent Center for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS) Interim Final Rule allowing any vaccine authorized by the Food and Drug Administration to be covered at no cost to Medicare beneficiaries. Second, the Provider Relief Fund, which gives uninsured individuals access to the vaccine,

must also cover co-pay or out of pocket fees, as well as costs for outreach to uninsured communities. Finally, Congress should provide states with additional financial assistance to supplement the Family First Coronavirus Response Act by ensuring that payment rates to providers are sufficient to allow Medicaid recipients to access the vaccine at no cost and providers to perform outreach to vulnerable communities.

The exact costs of the vaccines for patients remain unknown, however, studies have shown that individuals on Medicaid have lower vaccination rates than those with private health insurance.

In submitting today's letter, Attorney General Connors joins the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Washington.

A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).

###

For more information, contact:

Krishna F. Jayaram
Special Assistant to the Attorney General
(808) 586-1284
Email: ATG.PIO@hawaii.gov
Web: <http://ag.hawaii.gov>
Twitter: @ATGHlgov