



“Bringing people together to serve humanity”

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March 2, 2021

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

And

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

THRU

African Methodist Episcopal Church
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
American Baptist Churches, USA
Berean Missionary Baptist Association, Inc.
Bible Way Church World-Wide, Inc.
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Church of God in Christ
Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International
Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church
House of God
International Bible Way Church of Jesus Christ
International Council of Community Churches
Mt. Calvary Holy Church of America
Mount Sinai Holy Church of America, Inc.
National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
National Baptist Convention of America International, Inc.
National Council of Churches
National Primitive Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc.

Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.
The Potter's House Church
The Union of Black Episcopalian
Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International

Dear Secretary Xavier Becerra,

The National Black Church Initiative (NCBI), a coalition of 150,000 African American and Latino churches, has a membership of 27.7 million African American and Latino churchgoers supporting Dr. Joshua Sharfstein to become the next commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

There are several qualified candidates for this position; but we strongly believe that Dr. Sharfstein's broad-based knowledge and his inclusive, culturally sensitive approach to public health will produce appropriate and effective courses of action in the ever-changing environment of the pandemic. His deep understanding of the root causes of the pandemic and other healthcare inequities have inspired great confidence in him from the leaders of the African American and Latino religious communities. We feel that we will have someone at the FDA who will protect us and also be able to work effectively with the pharmaceutical industry.

We believe these things about Dr. Sharfstein for four reasons:

(1) From the beginning of his career, he has developed and implemented programs that serve Americans from all walks of life, improving their health and the quality of their existence. He has always been able to see the bigger picture and has worked creatively and collaboratively with others to solve problems. For example, early in his training he studied the impact of housing barriers on people's health, an issue of great importance to African American and Latino families, years before the impact of housing on health had been considered a policy or a medical issue.

This has earned him the unprecedented confidence of our African American and Latino physician colleagues.

(2) Dr. Sharfstein has proven himself as a leader for many years. He was the former Principal Deputy Commissioner of the FDA, Secretary of Health for the state of Maryland and the city of Baltimore, has worked on key health issues in the U.S. Congress, and is currently a professor and Vice Dean for Public Health Practice and Community Engagement at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. At Johns Hopkins, he directs the recently created American Health Initiative, which trains professionals from all walks of life, including police officers, clinic directors, doctors, lawyers, and teachers, to improve health in their communities.

(3) Dr. Sharfstein knows the FDA well and will ensure that its decisions are transparent, beyond reproach, and based on the principles of public health. The medical experts who know Dr. Sharfstein best all mention that his ability to dissect complex problems, articulate core issues, and weigh the pros and cons of a course of action are outstanding.

(4) The NBCI is currently working with a team of African American and Latino physicians to assess the efficacy and safety of the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines so we can assure every eligible individual in the African American and Latino communities that it is safe to get vaccinated. We are also dedicated to ensuring that accurate information about COVID-19 treatments is available, and to making sure that these treatments have been tested on diverse populations so everyone can feel confident and safe when they receive them. We think that Dr. Sharfstein will both understand and support these essential goals.

The NBCI Team members listed below are eager to work with the FDA:

- Dr. Joseph Webster, Committee Chair and a gastroenterologist from Tallahassee, FL
- Dr. William Strudwick, an emergency medicine physician in Washington, D.C.
- Dr. Anthony Ibe, a family medicine practitioner in Washington, D.C.
- Dr. Lisa Fitzpatrick, an infectious disease specialist recently appointed to the Roundtable on Health Literacy of the National Academy of Sciences
- Dr. Walter Faggett, a pediatric psychiatrist and member of the Emerson Clinical Research Institute
- Dr. Fabian Sandoval, CEO and President of the Emerson Clinical Research Institute
- Dr. Elena Fuentes-Afflick, Vice-Chair of Pediatrics at the University of California at San Francisco
- Dr. Glenn Flores, Chair of Pediatrics at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center
- Dr. Mario Pacheco, a family practitioner in the rural Southwest and Vice Chancellor for Hispanic/Latino Health at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center

One of our major concerns is that so many medical treatments approved by the FDA have not been studied on enough African Americans and Latinos to statistically determine if their benefits outweigh their risks for these demographic groups, making it impossible for these patients and their physicians to make informed decisions about the best options for their medical care. We believe Dr. Sharfstein will be sensitive to these issues and will do more to ensure minority representation in studies submitted to the FDA for review.

The NBCI's goal is to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. We provide critical wellness information to all of our members and the public based on faith, rigorous statistical analyses, and sound health science. We also offer successful out-of-the-box, cutting-edge solutions to stubborn economic, healthcare, and social issues. Our current initiative is a comprehensive plan to vaccinate all 106 million African Americans and Latinos against COVID-19.

The NBCI believes that Dr. Joshua Sharfstein is an excellent choice to be the next commissioner for the FDA. Thank you for considering our recommendation.

Sincerely,

The Right Most Rev. Anthony Evans
President

CC:

Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes, III

Dr. Jamal Harrison Bryant

Bishop Rudy McKissick

Bishop W. Darrin Moore

Bishop Talbert Swan

Dr. Wendell Anthony

Dr. Traci Blackmon

Dr. Amos C. Brown

Pastor Corey Brown

Bishop John R. Bryant

Dr. Iva Carruthers

Dr. Delmon Coates

Dr. Jawanza Karriem Colvin

Dr. Marcus Cosby

Dr. Wayne Croft

Dr. William H. Curtis
Rev. Leah Daughtery
Dr. Marcus Davidson
Bishop James Davis
Rev. Jacques D. Denkins
Dr. James W.E. Dixon, II
Dr. John Faison, Sr.
Drs. Elaine and Floyd Flake
Rev. Willie D. Francois, III
Bishop Sam Green
Dr. Neichelle Guidry
Dr. Cynthia Hale
Pastor Victor T. Hall
Rev. J.C. Howard
Rev. Alexander E.M. Johnson
Dr. Jeffrey Allen Johnson, Sr.
Dr. Marcus D. King
Bishop Vashti McKenzie
Pastor Breonus Mitchell
Dr. Joshua L. Mitchell
Bishop Paul S. Morton
Dr. Otis Moss, III
Dr. James Perkins
Dr. Zina Pierre
President Welton Pleasant, II
Bishop Dennis Proctor
Dr. Nelson B. Rivers, III
Bishop Marvin Sapp
Drs. J. Alfred Smith Sr. and Jr.
Dr. Gina Stewart
Dr. Warren H. Stewart, Sr.
Dr. Alyn Waller
Dr. Lance Watson
Dr. Maurice Watson
Dr. Howard John Wesley Dr.
Ralph Douglas West, Sr.