

January 26, 2021

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The Honorable Ron Wyden
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U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

We are writing to share our support of the nomination of Xavier Becerra for the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Mr. Becerra has a long history of support for expanding access to affordable health care in his role as a longtime member of the House of Representatives and as the California Attorney General.

As the nation's leading independent nonprofit working on behalf of the 37 million Americans with kidney disease, the American Kidney Fund is dedicated to ensuring that every kidney patient has access to health care, and that every person at risk for kidney disease is empowered to prevent it. AKF provides a complete spectrum of programs and services: prevention outreach, top-rated health educational resources, and direct financial assistance enabling the nation's low-income dialysis and transplant patients to access lifesaving medical care.

HHS is one of the largest and most important federal agencies – especially now, during the deadly COVID-19 pandemic – and Mr. Becerra's experience as both a legislator and an executive give him the needed expertise to lead during this crucial time. People with kidney disease need a strong leader at HHS now more than ever.

Kidney disease and kidney failure, also known as end-stage renal disease (ESRD), have a disproportionate impact on racial and ethnic minorities. Compared to white Americans, Black Americans are 3.4 times more likely to develop kidney failure; Hispanic Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives and Asian Americans are respectively 1.5 times, 1.9 times and 1.3 times more likely. These statistics—and more importantly, people—have come into sharper focus as COVID-19 continues to spread across the country, with those same communities facing higher rates of hospitalizations and mortality during the pandemic. People with underlying kidney disease and ESRD are higher risk for COVID-19 and death related to the disease. Additionally, COVID-19 itself can also cause kidney damage.

We are honored to share our support for a dedicated and experienced public servant like Xavier Becerra to lead HHS.

Sincerely,



LaVarne A. Burton
President and CEO



Jerry D. Klepner
Chairman, Board of Trustees

cc: Sean McCluskie
HHS Chief of Staff