

# HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

Resolution HHS-22-21

## ADDRESSING VACCINE HESITANCY IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

WHEREAS, “Vaccine Hesitancy” comes from an assemblage of fears, deliberation, and questioning and should not be dismissed, miscategorized, to make it more palatable as being ‘hesitant’;

WHEREAS, systemic racism, institutional oppression, and a lack of diversity in medicine, biomedical research, public health, and the government have contributed to mistrust in communities of color which has affected vaccination progress;

WHEREAS, legislation cannot immediately solve the mistrust in our healthcare system due to 400+ years of Black and Brown people being used for medical research and experiments without permission and proper treatment;

WHEREAS, while we can point to the United States Public Health Service's Syphilis Study at Tuskegee, where nearly 400 Black men in a United States Public Health Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention between 1932 and 1972 in an ethically abusive study, were untreated, there has been a long history of exploitation since colonization due to a lack of medical ethics that should have protected Black and Brown people;

WHEREAS, distrust today still exists, policymakers can provide workers ways to alleviate their concerns related to costs, time, and job security;

WHEREAS, some lower wage workers shun vaccination for fear of losing a day’s pay to get the vaccine, or needing time off for possible side effects that could force them to miss more time;

WHEREAS, these workers make the tough decision of missing time if they must take their parents to get vaccinated as well as take care of them because they fear losing even a day’s pay is terrifying for those already trying to catch-up on bills, expenses, etc. that piled-up during the closure mandates;

WHEREAS, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) COVID-19 Vaccine monitor, (an ongoing research project tracking the public’s attitudes and experiences with COVID-19 vaccinations), unvaccinated Hispanic and Black adults are more likely than White adults to cite worries about missing work and having to pay for the vaccine as major reasons for not being vaccinated;

WHEREAS, in addition, unvaccinated Hispanic adults are more likely than unvaccinated White adults to say they are too busy, or would have difficulty traveling to a vaccination site, and are not sure how or where to get the vaccine;

# HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

## Resolution HHS-22-21

WHEREAS, nearly 20% of all workers said they haven't gotten vaccinated yet because they're afraid of missing work or because they're too busy;

WHEREAS, that proportion jumps to 26% for Black workers and 40% for Hispanic workers;

WHEREAS, 65% of workers were encouraged by their employer to get a COVID-19 vaccine;

WHEREAS, 50% overall say their employer provides them with paid time off to get a COVID-19 vaccine and recover from any side effects. However, among:

- Black workers (38%)
- those without college degrees (41%)
- household incomes less than \$40,000 annually (41%)
- workers who don't have health insurance, just one-third (33%) say their employer provides paid time off for vaccine administration and side effects;

WHEREAS, it is not enough for employers to verbally encourage vaccinations, nor is it equitable to make vaccination mandatory if there is no system in place to assure these workers that their jobs are safe;

WHEREAS, job insecurity, change in household dynamics, and future uncertainty are contributing to higher Pandemic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for lower wage workers than full-time employees, and low-wage, hourly, and contract workers may not have access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP);

WHEREAS, according to McKinsey & Co. Center for Societal Benefit of Healthcare, those working in essential jobs that cannot be done from home are concerned with access to healthcare, reluctant to access health care due to historical trauma and racism, lack of health insurance coverage, lack of ability to pay for health care, and difficulties with transportation and getting time off work;

WHEREAS, because we do not have an equitable healthcare system, during the pandemic, legislation is required to ensure that these workers have access to the same EAP benefits as full-time employees; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that we identify ALL workers at elevated risk of PTSD; provide resources for risk mitigation; and focus on prevention strategies or ways to lessen the PTSD burden.

# HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

Resolution HHS-22-21

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) urges the US Congress and state legislatures to do the following:

- Paid time off for lower-wage, hourly, and contract employees to get vaccinated as well as the following day to recoup from soreness, muscle aches, and other side effects
- Paid time off for these workers to take parents, children, and immediate household members to get vaccinated and the time need to assist them as loved one(s) recoup from the side effects
- Assistance with locating the closest vaccination site, as not every household has broadband, WIFI, smartphones, laptops, etc.
- Employer cover transportation costs to and from vaccination site if needed
- Extend EAP benefits and healthcare plan options to these workers, equal to full-time employees
- Clearly communicate the options that are available to get vaccinated; access to EAP benefits; and the differences in healthcare plan options
- Ensure that all communications will be available in the language of the employee;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL supports public information campaigns aimed at the vaccine hesitancy in communities of color, and efforts to ensure that vaccination sites are readily available in communities of color; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the Unites States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

**SPONSOR: Representative London Lamar (TN)**

**Committee of Jurisdiction: Health and Human Services (HHS) Policy Committee**

**Ratified in Plenary Session: December 2, 2021**

**Ratification certified by: Representative Billy Mitchell (GA), NBCSL President**