



March 17, 2022

Dear Mr. President, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy,

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On behalf of the nonpartisan, nonprofit alliance, Research!America, I am writing to respectfully request that you work together, quickly, to fund an elevated effort to out-innovate COVID-19 variants and future pandemics. The reported surge of coronavirus infections in Western Europe reinforce the reality that the current storm has not passed and that an even more destructive one could arise at any time. Our nation cannot afford to move at the speed of wishful thinking. We need a renewed commitment to research and development (R&D) urgency, and we need it now.

We do not know what will follow Omicron and its B.2 subvariant. A new variant or a new pandemic could emerge in the next hour, the next month, the next year...there simply is no way to predict the breathing room we have. What we do know is: 1) pandemic threats are emerging far more frequently than in the past<sup>1</sup>; and 2) it is possible, by working quickly, to bolster our defenses against these threats and the variants they engender.

Important progress has been made toward a vaccine effective against numerous COVID-19 variants.<sup>2</sup> With further work, there is every reason to believe this vaccine would not only be effective against present and future COVID-19 variants, but that it could also offer protection against future threats from the larger viral family COVID-19 belongs to. Additional research can also facilitate the development of new treatments (such as new oral antivirals) to mitigate symptoms and prevent severe disease outcomes.

The Omicron wave in the United States saw the highest daily 7-day moving average to date of cases, emergency department visits, and hospital admissions. A higher percentage of hospital beds were occupied with a COVID-19 patient during Omicron than in the previous two winters of this pandemic.<sup>3</sup> At the peak of Omicron, children under 5 years of age were hospitalized at approximately five times the rate recorded during the Delta wave.<sup>4</sup> This data signals a significant strain on our nation's healthcare system. Now is not the time to let down our guard or lay down our weapons, the most potent of which is public and private sector driven R&D.

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<sup>1</sup> Penn, M. (2021, August 23). [Statistics say large pandemics are more likely than we thought](#). Duke Global Health Institute. Retrieved March 16, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Joyce, M. G. et al. [A SARS-CoV-2 ferritin nanoparticle vaccine elicits protective immune responses in nonhuman primates](#). *Sci Transl Med* (2021)

<sup>3</sup> Luliano AD, Brunkard JM, Boehmer TK, et al. [Trends in Disease Severity and Health Care Utilization During the Early Omicron Variant Period Compared with Previous SARS-CoV-2 High Transmission Periods — United States, December 2020–January 2022](#). *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2022;71:146–152.

<sup>4</sup> Marks KJ, Whitaker M, Agathis NT, et al. [Hospitalization of Infants and Children Aged 0–4 Years with Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 — COVID-NET, 14 States, March 2020–February 2022](#). *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. ePub: 15 March 2022.

Funding is needed to ramp up our nation's R&D offensive against the COVID-19 pandemic and those that follow. The sooner a strong initiative is launched, the greater the chance of saving millions of lives and trillions of dollars going forward.

We deeply appreciate your service, and that of your respective staff members, during one of the most challenging periods in our nation's history. Under your leadership, we hope the U.S. leverages our unparalleled public and private sector R&D capacity and stops this and future pandemics in their tracks.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Woolley". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Mary Woolley  
President and CEO of Research!America