



IMPROVING THE US POPULATION’S PHYSICAL HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BY INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL FITNESS

November 20, 2020

The Honorable Joe Biden
Presidential Transition Office
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden:

As our next President, your focus will be on many important issues and goals during your tenure, especially with the imperative to address the current COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring that all Americans have an equal opportunity to live a long, healthy, and fulfilling life. As you set the priorities for your administration, the Physical Activity Alliance strongly urges you to include physical activity promotion and physical fitness for all people living in the US.

Being physically active is one of the most important lifestyle behaviors people can engage in to maintain physical health, mental health and well-being.¹

- Regular physical activity is both health-promoting and important for disease treatment and prevention with numerous benefits that contribute to a disability-free lifespan.²
- Studies show that physical activity is associated with strong immune response, risk reduction from community-acquired infectious disease and mortality and increased vaccine potency.^{3,4,5}
- It also contributes to social connectedness, quality of life, and environmental sustainability.⁶
- Currently in the US, only 26 percent of men, 19 percent of women, and 20 percent of adolescents report sufficient activity to meet the relevant aerobic and muscle-strengthening physical activity guidelines.¹ Even so, current population physical activity levels avert 3.9 million premature deaths globally and 140,200 premature deaths in the US on an annual basis.⁷
- Low physical activity and low fitness pose immediate and long-term threats to our nation’s safety and security. Currently, 71% of Americans ages 17-24 fail to meet core eligibility requirements for entrance into the military, creating a serious recruiting deficit.⁸
- Among those who do meet basic requirements for service, musculoskeletal injuries associated with low fitness levels cost the Department of Defense hundreds of millions of dollars,⁹ and have been identified as the most significant medical impediment to military readiness.¹⁰

Here are some policy priorities we hope your Administration will implement or work with Congress to address related to physical activity and population health and well-being:

- **Prioritize Physical Activity Across the Federal Policy Landscape**
 - Create an interagency task force or White House Council at the federal level to address physical activity and physical fitness in federal policy in such areas as

- addressing climate change by increasing walking, biking and access to public transportation, national security and emergency response, education, labor, public health, environmental sustainability, research, infrastructure investment, and community and economic development.
- Coordinate physical activity research across the federal government to develop a cross-cutting strategic prioritization that includes the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Departments of Transportation, Education, and other relevant agencies.
 - Pursue a “physical activity-in-all” policies approach. Additionally, where the federal government is addressing nutrition, obesity, healthy living, and chronic disease, physical activity promotion should be included as a key indicator.
 - Incorporate physical activity into the upgrade of public health infrastructure, surveillance, and data modernization efforts.
 - **Regularly Revise and Update the [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#)**
 - **Support Physical Activity Assessment, Prescription and Referral in Health Care**
 - Integrate physical activity across the health care system and into delivery of care to bring best practices to all patients and health consumers by:
 - Supporting standardization of a measure for physical activity in electronic health records and developing performance and quality measures for providers around physical activity assessment, prescription and referral.
 - Asking the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to support coverage and payment determinations for physical activity prescription and allow for remote patient monitoring and virtual delivery.
 - **Fund the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Active People Healthy Nation initiative to help 27 million people be more physically active by 2027.**

The Physical Activity Alliance is the nation’s broadest coalition dedicated to promoting physical activity for health. We hope you will include these priorities within your Administration’s work. Physical activity is integral to population health and well-being, educational achievement, effective health care delivery, emergency preparedness, military readiness, and supporting our nation’s recovery from the pandemic. If we can help more Americans to be physically active, we will save lives, protect families from the costs and pain of dealing with infectious and non-communicable diseases, contribute to lower vehicle emissions, reduce racial, ethnic and gender health disparities, and make American employers and the U.S. overall much more productive and successful.

Please reach out to Laurie Whitsel, Ph.D (moreactive@paamovewithus.org or 724-331-4507) if we can answer any questions and we look forward to staying in touch in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Monte Ward
President - Physical Activity Alliance

References:

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- ¹⁰ Hauret KG, Jones BH, Bullock SH, Canham-Chervak M, Canada S. Musculoskeletal injuries description of an under-recognized injury problem among military personnel. *AmJ Prev Med*. Jan 2010; 38(1)(suppl):S61-S70.