

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 6, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

We write on behalf of our constituents living with lupus and rheumatoid arthritis to respectfully request that the Coronavirus Task Force take action to help ensure that these patients continue to have access to hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and chloroquine as these medications are being studied for use in treating coronavirus (COVID-19).

As you know, HCQ and chloroquine have been successfully used to treat lupus and rheumatoid arthritis for decades. The drugs are approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat these diseases and they help patients to manage their symptoms, avoid disability, and even early death. In many cases, there are no alternatives to HCQ and chloroquine and the medications are key elements in the standard of care for these patients.

Unfortunately, we have received numerous reports from our constituents living with lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, and the medical professionals who treat them, that they are increasingly unable to access their medications due to the increased demand for these drugs as a result of their potential use for COVID-19. In some cases, patients are facing shortages of the drugs and there are insufficient quantities available to meet the demand; in others, patients are denied access because the drugs have been set aside solely for COVID-19 or even for the future use for COVID-19.

There are also reports of overprescribing and irresponsible prescribing practices, which deplete supplies of the drugs available to patients with lupus and rheumatoid arthritis who have relied the drugs for decades. Moreover, prescriptions can be limited to 7-14 days, forcing patients who are immunocompromised to face a greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 by traveling outside their home more frequently to obtain their medications.

We recognize that the solutions to these challenges may be complex, involving multiple different stakeholders across government and the private sector. Any solutions also must take into account the current global public health crisis and the need to prevent the spread of COVID-19, identify treatments, and deliver those treatments to patients suffering from COVID-19. However, we believe that, working together, we can overcome these challenges and balance the needs of people with lupus and rheumatoid arthritis with the priority of finding treatments for COVID-19.

We appreciate the work of the Coronavirus Task Force and, as you continue your efforts, we urge you to take action as appropriate to help address the challenges people with lupus and rheumatoid arthritis currently face in accessing the medications they need.

Sincerely,



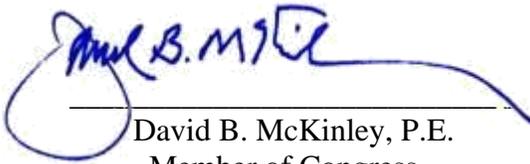
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

/s/

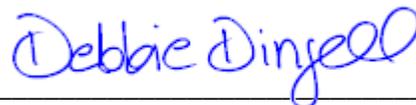
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