

January 19, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

This time of year, the colorectal cancer community begins to prepare for the month of March, a time when we come together to shed light on the devastating impact of this disease. It is an opportunity for physicians to speak to their patients about colorectal cancer, for people to get screened, and for the colorectal cancer community to come together and be heard. We ask that you show your support by recognizing March as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month and by lighting the White House blue, the official color of colorectal cancer, to honor those we have lost and those fighting this disease.

Colorectal cancer is often thought of as a disease that only affects older people. But the face of colorectal cancer is changing. Over the last four decades colorectal cancer has been steadily increasing in young people, and in just eight short years, it is on track to become the number one cancer killer of persons 20 - 49yrs old¹. Colorectal cancer also disproportionately impacts people of color. According to the American Cancer Society, African Americans are 20% more likely to be diagnosed with CRC and 40% more likely to die from it compared with other racial groups. Indigenous communities also have higher rates of colorectal cancer than their white counterparts². And colorectal cancer is expected to account for 11% of cancer deaths among Hispanic men and 9% of cancer deaths for Hispanic women³. This doesn't have to be our reality.

In light of the challenges posed by COVID-19, awareness around colorectal cancer screening has become more important than ever. Colorectal cancer is unique in that if it is detected early through screening, it can be effectively treated through surgery and/or chemotherapy and radiation or even prevented completely. But the pandemic has disrupted preventive cancer screening in the United States, including for colorectal cancer. Unfortunately, lower rates of routine cancer screenings lead to delayed diagnosis and increased cancer death. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) estimates that there could be as many as 4,500 additional colorectal cancer deaths because of the drop in screening due to COVID-19⁴. Unfortunately, even prior to the challenges presented by COVID-19, far too many Americans were not getting screened. It is

¹Rahib, L., Wehner, M. R., Matrisian, L. M., & Nead, K. T. (2021). Estimated Projection of US Cancer Incidence and Death to 2040. *JAMA network open*, 4(4), e214708. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.4708>

² American Cancer Society. (2020). Colorectal Cancer Facts & Figures 2020-2022. American Cancer Society. Retrieved from <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/colorectal-cancer-facts-and-figures/colorectal-cancer-facts-and-figures-2020-2022.pdf>

³ American Cancer Society. (2018). Colorectal Cancer Facts & Figures for Hispanics/Latinos 2018-2020. American Cancer Society. Retrieved from <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/cancer-facts-and-figures-for-hispanics-and-latins/cancer-facts-and-figures-for-hispanics-and-latins-2018-2020.pdf>

⁴ Sharpless N. E. (2020). COVID-19 and cancer. *Science* (New York, N.Y.), 368(6497), 1290. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abd3377>

estimated that tens of thousands of colorectal cancer deaths could be avoided if people are screened appropriately⁵.

March was officially designated National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month by the House, Senate and White House in 1999 after extensive advocacy by the colorectal cancer community. As a leader who is both a champion of science and committed to ending cancer as we know it, we hope you will join us in this effort and continue the tradition of recognizing March as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

The undersigned organizations represent thousands of colorectal cancer patients, survivors, and advocates. We will continue to fight and we urge you to join us. Please continue to recognize March as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in 2022 and light the White House blue to honor the colorectal cancer community. Together, we can change the statistics around this disease.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Fight Colorectal Cancer
AliveAndKickn
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Gastroenterology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
California Colorectal Cancer Coalition (C4)
Colon Cancer Coalition
Colon Cancer Foundation
Colon Cancer Prevention Project
Colorado Cancer Coalition
Colorado Cancer Screening Program - University of Colorado Cancer Center
Colorectal Cancer Alliance
CRC Change
Digestive Disease National Coalition
GI Cancers Alliance
Hitting Cancer Below the Belt
Louisiana Cancer Prevention and Control Program
Prevent Cancer Foundation
The Blue Hat Foundation
The Colon Club
The Gloria Borges WunderGlo Foundation
The Raymond Foundation
United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc.
Washington Colon Cancer Stars

⁵ Meester, R. G., Doubeni, C. A., Lansdorp-Vogelaar, I., Goede, S. L., Levin, T. R., Quinn, V. P., Ballegooijen, M. v., Corley, D. A., & Zauber, A. G. (2015). Colorectal cancer deaths attributable to nonuse of screening in the United States. *Annals of epidemiology*, 25(3), 208–213.e1. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2014.11.011>