

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

January 20, 2023

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. 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. 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 thank you for recognizing Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month last year, for reigniting the Cancer Moonshot to end cancer as we know it, and for your leadership and commitment to the cancer community in the United States. We ask that you once again **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 seven short years, it is on track to become the number one cancer killer of persons 20 - 49 years old.¹ Colorectal cancer also disproportionately impacts people of color. According to the American Cancer Society, African Americans are 20% more likely to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and 40% more likely to die from it compared with other racial groups. American Indian/Alaskan Natives have elevated colorectal cancer incidence and death rates compared to other populations and represent the only racial/ethnic group for whom colorectal cancer mortality rates are not declining.² Furthermore, colorectal cancer is expected to account for 11% of cancer deaths among Hispanic men and 9% of cancer deaths for Hispanic women.³ This doesn't have to be our reality.

In light of the preventive cancer screening disruptions caused 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. 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-latinos/cancer-facts-and-figures-for-hispanics-and-latinos-2018-2020.pdf>

estimated that tens of thousands of colorectal cancer deaths could be avoided if people are screened appropriately.⁴ Fortunately, colorectal cancer has numerous screening modalities and increasing colorectal cancer screening rates can contribute to the Cancer Moonshot goals by helping the United States get back on track after almost 10 million missed cancer screenings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 2023 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,

AliveAndKickn
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Radiology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
Association of Black Gastroenterologists and Hepatologists
Bluem
California Colorectal Cancer Coalition
Cancer Support Community
Cheeky Charity
Colon Cancer Coalition
Colon Cancer Prevention Project
Colorado Cancer Coalition
Colorectal Cancer Alliance
Fight Colorectal Cancer
FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
GI Cancers Alliance
Hitting Cancer Below the Belt
Hollingsworth Colorectal Cancer Awareness Fund
Louisiana Cancer Prevention & Control Programs
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Comprehensive Cancer Network
National Minority Quality Forum
Nebraska Cancer Coalition
One Cancer Place
PALTOWN Development Foundation/COLON TOWN

⁴ 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>

Prevent Cancer Foundation
Robert E. Reed Gastrointestinal Oncology Research Foundation
The Blue Hat Foundation
The Collaborative Group of the Americas on Inherited Gastrointestinal Cancer
The Colon Club
The Gloria Borges WunderGlo Foundation
The Raymond Foundation
The Ruesch Center for the Cure of GI Cancers
United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc.
Washington Colon Cancer Stars
Young Adult Survivors United