



24 May 2021

Dear President Biden,

Our congratulations on your inauguration as our forty-sixth President of the United States. Our association includes the Directors of the major bioethics centers in the United States. We applaud your [Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking](#). In support of this commitment to restoring trust in science, we believe it is crucial that your administration reconstitute the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues, or a similar body, to continue working on the thorny ethical challenges that confront our nation and its health care system.

Our association collectively represents the vast majority of bioethics professionals who examine the ethical implications of questions such as rationing and fair allocation of resources, including during the COVID epidemic; guidelines for the use of advanced biotechnologies; clinician-patient relationships; the beginning and end of life; social justice in health care; and so on. Past commissions, including the one organized by the Obama Administration, have created landmark resources for use not only by the bioethics profession but by medicine as a whole and by private industry working on medicine and biotechnology. The resources are kept on active websites that are commonly used by those needing guidance on difficult bioethical issues. We have appended a list of the most important federal bioethics commissions, and some of their contributions, to this letter.

After 33 years of commissions serving various administrations and the nation, the commission was disbanded in January 2017. We strongly believe in the need to reconstitute such a commission to address some of the new and challenging issues that confront us today.

COVID-19 alone has raised a host of ethical questions, such as the triage of sick patients given limited ICU beds and ventilator availability, health disparities and fair distribution of tests and vaccines, the mandatory use of masks and other preventive measures, and the pressures on, and obligations of, our health care workers. A commission would have been invaluable over the last 12 months, and still can be of great value as our nation continues to struggle with this pandemic. In addition, other important issues are emergent, such as the increased integration of artificial intelligence into health care, the rise of telemedicine, drug shortages, advances in synthetic biology, gene editing, and advances in the brain sciences.

Bioethics commissions have proven their worth again and again, and have provided our nation with some of its most thoughtful and important resources to guide ethical decision-making in American health care. We as a national association of bioethics professionals stand ready to advise and serve in whatever capacity would be useful to your administration.

Sincerely,

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Copies: Vice President Harris, Ron Klain JD, Eric Lander PhD, Alondra Nelson PhD, Francis Collins MD PhD, Anthony Fauci MD, Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey,



## **U.S. FEDERAL BIOETHICS COMMISSIONS**

### **National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1974-78)**

*Research on the Fetus*

*Research Involving Prisoners*

*Research Involving Children*

*Psychosurgery: Report and Recommendations*

*Disclosure of Research Information Under the Freedom of Information Act*

*Research Involving Those Institutionalized as Mentally Infirm*

*Ethical Guidelines for the Delivery of Health Services by DHEW*

*Institutional Review Boards*

*Implications of Advances in Biomedical and Behavioral Research*

*The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research*

### **Presidential Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1978-83)**

*Defining Death*

*Protecting Human Subjects*

*Whistleblowing in Biomedical Research*

*IRB Guidebook*

*Compensating for Research Injuries*

*Splicing Life: The Social and Ethical Issues of Genetic Engineering with Human Beings*

*Making Health Care Decisions*

*Deciding to Forego Life-Sustaining Treatment*

*Implementing Human Research Regulations*

*Screening and Counseling for Genetic Conditions*

*Securing Access to Health Care*

### **National Bioethics Advisory Commission (1996-2001)**

*Cloning Human Beings*

*Research Involving Persons with Mental Disorders That May Affect Decisionmaking Capacity*

*Research Involving Human Biological Materials: Ethical Issues and Policy Guidance*

*Ethical Issues in Human Stem Cell Research*

*Ethical and Policy Issues in International Research: Clinical Trials in Developing Countries*

*Ethical and Policy Issues in Research Involving Human Participants*



### [President's Council on Bioethics \(2001-2009\)](#)

*Human Cloning and Human Dignity: An Ethical Inquiry*

*Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness*

*Being Human: Readings from the President's Council on Bioethics*

*Monitoring Stem Cell Research*

*Reproduction and Responsibility: The Regulation of New Biotechnologies*

*White Paper: Alternative Sources of Human Pluripotent Stem Cells*

*Taking Care: Ethical Caregiving in Our Aging Society*

*Human Dignity and Bioethics: Essays Commissioned by the President's Council on Bioethics*

*The Changing Moral Focus of Newborn Screening: An Ethical Analysis*

*Controversies in the Determination of Death: A White Paper by the President's Council on Bioethics*

### [Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues \(2009-2017\)](#)

*New Directions: The Ethics of Synthetic Biology and Emerging Technologies*

*"Ethically Impossible" STD Research in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948*

*Moral Science: Protecting Participants in Human Subjects Research*

*Privacy and Progress in Whole Genome Sequencing*

*Safeguarding Children: Pediatric Medical Countermeasure Research*

*Anticipate and Communicate: Ethical Management of Incidental and Secondary Findings in the Clinical, Research, and Direct-to-Consumer Contexts*

*Gray Matters: Integrative Approaches for Neuroscience, Ethics, and Society*

*Gray Matters: Topics at the Intersection of Neuroscience, Ethics, and Society*

*Ethics and Ebola: Public Health Planning and Response*

*Bioethics for Every Generation: Deliberation and Education in Health, Science, and Technology*