

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from Cynthia Adinig on the Dissolution of the HHS Long COVID and Health Equity Advisory Committees

On February 19, 2025, President Trump issued the "Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy" executive order, which eliminated the Department of Health and Human Services' Long COVID and Health Equity advisory committees. As a member of the Long COVID advisory committee and a longtime advocate for equitable healthcare, I find this decision deeply concerning.

The Long COVID advisory committee was established to ensure that millions of Americans suffering from Long COVID, including disabled individuals, veterans, rural communities, and marginalized populations, had a voice in shaping federal policy and research efforts. With an estimated 16 million people in the U.S. currently experiencing Long COVID, the need for government action has never been more urgent. Instead of strengthening support, this administration has chosen to eliminate the very committee tasked with addressing this crisis.

Similarly, the decision to dissolve the CMS Health Equity advisory committee is an attack on the ongoing fight to remove systemic barriers that prevent marginalized communities, including rural populations, from accessing high-quality healthcare. This decision disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals; groups that already face some of the worst health outcomes in America.

These cuts are being justified in the name of cost savings, yet studies have shown that failing to address Long COVID and structural health inequities will result in trillions of dollars in economic losses due to increased healthcare costs, lost wages, and diminished workforce participation. Without federal action, the burden will fall on already struggling hospitals and healthcare providers, particularly in rural areas where access to specialized care is already limited.

Adding to the absurdity of these cuts is the fact that unlike many government advisory committees, members of the Long COVID advisory committee were unpaid. My colleagues and I volunteered our time, expertise, and lived experience to serve the government for free because we understood the urgency of this crisis. The administration is not saving money by shutting us down, it is silencing those who were offering real solutions at no cost to taxpayers.

This is more than just bureaucratic restructuring. It is a deliberate decision to ignore the voices of patients, researchers, and public health experts who have spent years working to address the long-standing inequities in our healthcare system. It is a short-sighted policy that will ultimately cost far more than it saves.

While the government may choose to turn its back on Long COVID patients and marginalized communities, I remain open to discussions with policymakers who are willing to reconsider

these decisions and prioritize equitable healthcare solutions. I call on Congress, healthcare leaders, and the public to push back against these harmful cuts and demand accountability.

As I discuss in my upcoming book, *DEI Delusion: The Hidden Impact of Research in BIPOC Communities*, the rollback of health equity initiatives is not just a political move. It has real and devastating consequences for communities already fighting for equal access to care. Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s proposed healthcare plan, which aligns with efforts to dismantle DEI policies, raises serious concerns. His plan appears to conflict with his prior statements on medical freedom and patient rights, and I encourage him to engage in an open dialogue to clarify his stance. If his goal is truly to improve healthcare for all, I welcome the opportunity to discuss how equity can be incorporated into meaningful reform.

Now more than ever, I will stay informed, engaged, and committed to pushing for ethical, data-driven healthcare policies that serve all people, not just the privileged few.

About Cynthia Adinig

Cynthia Adinig is a nationally recognized health equity advocate, researcher, and co-founder of the BIPOC Equity Agency. She has worked with Congress, the NIH, and HHS to advance policies for Long COVID patients and marginalized communities. She has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *TIME*, and *USA Today* and has testified before Congress on medical racism and health disparities. Her upcoming book, *DEI Delusion: The Hidden Impact of Research in BIPOC Communities*, explores the systemic failures in research and healthcare that disproportionately impact marginalized communities.

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