

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 15, 2021

Anthony S. Fauci, M.D.
Director
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
5601 Fishers Lane
Bethesda, MD 20892

Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Janet Woodcock, M.D.
Acting Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Drs. Fauci, Walensky, and Woodcock:

On September 9, 2021, President Biden announced vaccine mandates in both the public and private sectors without making any exceptions for those who have been previously infected with COVID-19 and have natural immunity.¹ When asked to comment on the effectiveness of natural immunity against the virus based on recent studies from Israel, Dr. Anthony Fauci stated he did not “have a real firm answer” on that.² Almost 20 months into the pandemic, it is shocking that the chief medical advisor to the president does not have a firm grasp on the effectiveness of natural immunity, but still promotes freedom-robbing vaccine mandates. This administration clearly does not want the public to question whether natural immunity is more effective than vaccines. As President Biden revealingly declared, the vaccine mandate “is not about freedom or

¹ Speech by President Joseph R. Biden on COVID-19, Sept. 9, 2021, transcript available at <https://www.ny-times.com/2021/09/09/us/politics/biden-vaccine-mandates-transcript.html>.

² See Yair Golderg, et al, Protection of previous SARS CoV-2 infection is similar to that of BNT162b22 vaccine protection: A three-month nationwide experience from Israel, Apr. 24, 2021, (preprint) available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.04.20.21255670v1>, Sivan Gazit, et al, Comparing SARS-CoV-2 natural immunity to vaccine-induced immunity: reinfections versus breakthrough infections, Aug. 25, 2021, (preprint) available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.08.24.21262415v1>; Anderson Cooper 360, CNN, Sept. 9, 2021, available at <https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cub21ueWNvbnRl-bnQuY29tL2QveGxheWxpc3QvZDgzZjUyZTQtMjQ1NS00N2Y0LTk4MmUtYWV3OTAxMjBi-OTU0L2E2YzU3ZjAxLWQyOWYtNDU1Ni1iZTRiLWFiODYwMDJmNWJjNS9mM2JiZDY1OC01ZWVm-LTQ3OWEtOWFhNy1hYjg2MDAyZjViZDZvcG9kY2FzdC5yc3M/episode/NDE-wOWExM2QtMzAxNS00OWYxLWI2OGQtYWQ5ZjAwMDYyMzBk?hl=en&ved=2ahUKEwi8r7auhFX-yAhXbKfKfHXrFCB0QieUEegQIAhAF&ep=6> (time stamp at 11:44).

personal choice.”³ This administration’s decision to disregard the effectiveness of natural immunity and demand vaccination ignores current data and is an assault on all Americans’ civil liberties.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have openly admitted that they have not fully studied natural immunity, while also promoting vaccination over natural immunity. The CDC recommends that, regardless of prior infection status, individuals should be vaccinated as “experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19.”⁴ The FDA has also stated “[a]t this time, researchers do not know whether the presence of antibodies means that you are immune to COVID-19; or if you are immune, how long it will last.”⁵

Recent studies in Israel, however, appear to show that natural immunity may provide similar or even better protection than vaccines in the fight against COVID-19. In one preprint study, researchers found that, in terms of protecting against COVID-19, previous SARS-CoV-2 infection provided similar protection compared to the BioNTech vaccine.⁶ Another preprint study from Israel found that individuals with previous infection had 13 times the protection from the Delta variant than fully vaccinated, previously uninfected individuals.⁷ The same study found that there was a 27 fold increased risk for symptomatic breakthrough infection in vaccinated individuals compared to reinfection for individuals with natural immunity.⁸

The Israeli studies are not alone in suggesting the potency of natural immunity. Earlier this year, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) published an article about a January 2021 study from the La Jolla Institute for Immunology with the headline “Lasting immunity found after recovery from COVID-19.”⁹ The article stated that the researchers found that more than 95 percent of those who recovered from COVID-19 had durable immune system memory of the virus

³ Speech by President Joseph R. Biden on COVID-19, Sept. 9, 2021, transcript available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/09/us/politics/biden-vaccine-mandates-transcript.html>.

⁴ Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination, CDC, updated Sept. 9, 2021, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>.

⁵ Antibody (Serology) Testing for COVID-19: Information for Patients and Consumers, updated May 19, 2021, available at <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/antibody-serology-testing-covid-19-information-patients-and-consumers>.

⁶ Yair Golderg, et al, Protection of previous SARS CoV-2 infection is similar to that of BNT162b22 vaccine protection: A three-month nationwide experience from Israel, Apr. 24, 2021, (preprint) available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.04.20.21255670v1>.

⁷ Sivan Gazit, et al, Comparing SARS-CoV-2 natural immunity to vaccine-induced immunity: reinfections versus breakthrough infections, Aug. 25, 2021, (preprint) available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.08.24.21262415v1>.

⁸ *Id.* at 12.

⁹ Sharon Reynolds, Lasting immunity found after recovery from COVID-19, NIH Research Matters, Jan. 26, 2021, available at <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/lasting-immunity-found-after-recovery-covid-19#main-content> (referencing Jennifer M Dan, et al, Immunological memory to SARS-CoV-2 assessed for up to 8 months after infection, Jan. 6, 2021, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7919858/>).

up to 8 months later.¹⁰ The article noted that “the results provide hope that people receiving SARS-CoV-2 vaccines will develop similar lasting immune memories after vaccination.”¹¹

According to the CDC, an estimated 120 million Americans had been infected with COVID-19 as of May 2021.¹² The CDC itself acknowledges that immunity to a virus can occur “through infection with the actual disease (resulting in **natural immunity**).”¹³ I was tested for antibodies and found that seven months after having an asymptomatic case of COVID-19, my serology is positive for antibodies against SARS-COV-2 at roughly the same level as an individual that has received the Moderna vaccine.¹⁴ My experience seems consistent with the previously mentioned January 2021 study that found immune memory to SARS-CoV-2 lasted up to 8 months after infection.¹⁵ Some researchers and studies have found that natural immunity from COVID-19 could last years or potentially decades.¹⁶

To better understand Dr. Fauci’s, FDA’s, and CDC’s positions regarding natural immunity from COVID-19, I request the following information:

1. Approximately 20 months into this pandemic, why have U.S. health agencies not fully studied COVID-19 natural immunity?
2. Please explain why Dr. Fauci supports vaccine mandates for all individuals without apparently considering studies that show the effectiveness of natural immunity against the virus.
3. Did Dr. Fauci recommend to study the protection offered by natural immunity prior to President Biden’s decision to impose vaccine mandates? If not, why not?
4. Did FDA and CDC consider the January 2021 NIH article titled, “Lasting immunity found after recovery from COVID-19,” or other studies on natural immunity, when deciding that individuals, regardless of previous COVID-19 infection, should be vaccinated? If not, why not?
5. Does the FDA and CDC agree with the World Health Organization’s statement that “[a]vailable scientific data suggests that in most people immune responses remain robust

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Estimated COVID-19 Burden, CDC, updated July 27, 2021, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/burden.html>.

¹³ Vaccines & Immunizations: Immunity Types, CDC, Mar. 10, 2017, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/immunity-types.htm>. (emphasis included in original text).

¹⁴ I compared the results of my serology test to those of an individual who had received the Moderna vaccine. The results showed that the individual who received the Moderna vaccine and I had similar levels of antibodies.

¹⁵ Jennifer M Dan, et al, Immunological memory to SARS-CoV-2 assessed for up to 8 months after infection, Jan. 6, 2021, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7919858/>.

¹⁶ Apoorva Mandavilli, Immunity to the Coronavirus May Last Years, New Data Hint, New York Times, Nov. 17, 2020 (updated July 4, 2021), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/17/health/coronavirus-immunity.html>.

and protective against reinfection for at least 6-8 months after infection”?¹⁷ If not, why not?

6. Is the FDA or CDC aware of any adverse events in previously infected individuals that have been vaccinated? Please provide a complete list of these adverse events.
7. How many Americans received a vaccination after having COVID-19? If this data is unavailable, please explain why.
8. Provide the current estimated total number of infections of COVID-19 in the U.S.
9. Do the FDA and CDC dispute the findings of the two Israeli studies cited in this letter? If so, please provide the data that contradict these studies.
10. Provide the estimated number of breakthrough infections in vaccinated persons versus reinfections in previously infected persons.
11. Please explain why “antibody testing is not recommended to determine whether you are immune or protected from COVID-19.”¹⁸
12. Has the FDA or CDC examined the duration of natural immunity compared to vaccine immunity? If not, why not?

Please provide a response no later than September 29, 2021. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
United States Senator

¹⁷ Scientific Brief, COVID-19 Natural Immunity, World Health Organization, May 10, 2021, available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/341241/WHO-2019-nCoV-Sci-Brief-Natural-immunity-2021.1-eng.pdf>.

¹⁸ Antibody (Serology) Testing for COVID-19: Information for Patients and Consumers, updated May 19, 2021, available at <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/antibody-serology-testing-covid-19-information-patients-and-consumers>.