

# NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

February 28, 2022

Dr. Alondra Nelson  
Deputy Director of Science and Society of OSTP  
and Performing the Duties of Director of OSTP  
White House Office of Science and Technology Policy  
Executive Office of the President  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20504

Dear Dr. Nelson,

We are writing in support of the reinstatement of a Presidential Commission on Bioethics via Presidential Executive Order, as called for in the attached white paper.

Over the past five decades, US bioethics commissions under both Democratic and Republican administrations have helped guide the development of government policy affecting millions of US citizens in important ways. Impacts of the commissions can be measured by actions we take for granted today such as rules and regulations on the testing of human subjects and organ donation.

However, a Presidential Commission on Bioethics has not been appointed since 2017. As a result, despite many current events and developments with critical bioethics implications, important government decisions are being made without such a commission to examine, review, and help inform US policymaking.

An ad hoc group of experts authored the attached white paper and was led by Susan Wolf, Regents Professor, University of Minnesota, and Alta Charo, Warren P. Knowles Professor Emerita of Law and Bioethics, University of Wisconsin Madison (both members of the National Academy of Medicine) and included members of past Presidential commissions (Clinton-Gore, Bush-Cheney, and Obama-Biden Administrations), National Academies members, and other bioethics experts. This effort was prompted by a recent discussion with Kei Koizumi, OSTP's Principal Deputy Director for Policy, following his briefing to the National Academies Strategic Council for Research Excellence, Integrity, and Trust.

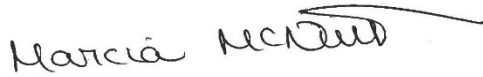
The white paper underscores the need for such a body and outlines in detail a set of existing and emerging topics for which it could provide analysis, advice, and public consensus building. The topics include:

- pandemic-related public health decisions such as how best to conduct rapid research on vaccines and treatments, how to reconcile population research with individual patient needs, how to allocate access to therapeutic interventions in times of scarcity, and how to address the devastating health disparities the pandemic has revealed;
- ethical issues related to climate change such as our obligations to future generations, research and interventions that can alter ecology, and the health and equity implications of effects from climate change; and

- the use of potentially biased artificial intelligence and adaptive algorithms in our health care research and clinical care.

We urge you to consider the reinstatement of a Presidential Bioethics Commission and appreciate your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Marcia McNutt in black ink.

Marcia McNutt  
President, National Academy of Sciences

Handwritten signature of Victor Dzau in black ink.

Victor Dzau  
President, National Academy of Medicine