



Chris Lehane  
Senior Vice President for Global Policy & Communications

Airbnb  
888 Brannan Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103

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Dr. David Kessler  
Chief Science Officer for COVID-19 Response  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Kessler,

In the context of President Biden's call for the United States to go on a "full scale war time effort" to defeat COVID-19, we are writing you to see if Airbnb can be helpful in identifying homes that could be used as vaccine distribution sites in communities where there may be a dearth of either pharmacies or medical facilities. These Airbnb "vaccine depots" could be available in locations where there are limited or no health care facilities or pharmacies, so-called "health care deserts."

In addition to being available to work with you to support the creation of vaccination sites, Airbnb and our community of U.S. hosts stand ready to support you and your team's critical work in terms of housing workers traveling to distribute vaccines, should they need housing support.

During the Second World War, businesses supported the national effort by helping turn America into the arsenal of democracy. We are deeply appreciative of President Biden's call to action and committed to working with national, state and local governments to win the war against this pandemic.

Since the declaration of a global pandemic last March, Airbnb's priority has been the health of the public and our communities and our actions amid the pandemic have been organized around the safety and wellbeing of all our stakeholders. We have been working closely with government leaders of cities, states, Tribes, and territories along with our nonprofit partners to identify ways Airbnb can organize our community of hosts to help support government needs.

Inspired by our host community, shortly after the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic, we launched Frontline Stays, a program that allows hosts to open their



homes to healthcare staff and first responders on the front lines of COVID-19. First announced in March, frontline responders and health care workers have booked more than 220,000 nights to stay close to their work or safely distance from their own families.<sup>1</sup> Our hosts opt-in to host healthcare staff and frontline responders in their area. Individual COVID-19 responders and those working through our business, nonprofit, and government partners are able to book stays, and we're actively working with global health organizations to keep safety and cleaning protocols up to date for the hosts and guests who participate. In implementing this program we worked with national governments such as the United Kingdom's National Health Service and France's Ministry of Health, states and local governments such as the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and labor organizations such as the New York Nurses and SEIU Local 1199.

The Frontline Stays program was informed by Airbnb's long-standing Open Homes initiative, through which hosts offer their space to shelter those in need, including evacuees, relief workers, refugees and asylum seekers. Disaster evacuations frequently result in hotel accommodations reaching capacity and safe lodging becomes a top priority for the government officials we work with to activate our program and community. More than 100,000 hosts have offered to open up their homes and helped provide accommodations to 75,000 people in times of need.<sup>2</sup>

Airbnb's Open Homes and Frontline Stays programs are now under the banner of Airbnb.org, a new non-profit dedicated to facilitating temporary stays for people in times of crisis. Last month we announced Airbnb.org will commit \$1 million to Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE) to help the organization fund stays for frontline workers administering free COVID-19 tests, conducting contact tracing, providing flu shots and coordinating quarantine support resources in 10 cities across the U.S., with the opportunity to launch in new cities as hotspots arise.<sup>3</sup>

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt everyday life around the world and you and your team begin the monumental task of quickly and equitably mounting a national vaccination program leveraging existing health care infrastructure, our community of hosts could be helpful in health care deserts—areas in rural<sup>4</sup> and remote areas of the U.S. that often lack traditional forms of accommodations for travelers. As you know, rural and remote populations across the country face various barriers to getting the health care they need, including financial, logistical, and structural challenges only made more complicated by the pandemic. Additionally, these areas have long suffered from health professional shortages and hospital closures.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.airbnb.com/our-generous-community-of-frontline-stays-hosts/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.airbnb.com/airbnborg/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.airbnb.com/airbnborg/>

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau defines rural as what exists outside of urban clusters with upwards of 2,500 residents or urban areas with 50,000 or more. In the 2011-2015 five year Census estimate, 13 states were identified having more than a 35 percent rural population.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/ed5bf0b5-dd14-473f-acdc-fd86ba98a6e1/investing-in-rural-america.pdf](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ed5bf0b5-dd14-473f-acdc-fd86ba98a6e1/investing-in-rural-america.pdf)



With over 57,000 Airbnb listings in rural states,<sup>6</sup> our community thrives where traditional lodging accommodations are few and far between. Our community may be helpful in providing housing and support to health care workers who may need to travel to rural areas as they seek to ensure all Americans have access to the health care they need.

The backbone of our Airbnb community is made up of the travel industry's everyday heroes—Americans who share their homes to earn extra income, entrepreneurs who offer local tourist experiences, and small business owners, of whom more than half depend on their Airbnb income to meet their monthly needs.

The majority of these hosts depend on their monthly earnings generated through the Airbnb platform. Airbnb hosts keep up to 97% of their listing price and in a recent survey we conducted, more than half of hosts surveyed in the U.S. (53%) said their Airbnb income helped them stay in their homes. Nearly one in five (18%) said hosting on Airbnb helped them avoid eviction or foreclosure. Of our U.S. hosts, 14% said they are teachers or live with a teacher, more than half of hosts are women, and seniors are one of our largest host cohorts.

Airbnb empowers people to belong anywhere, rather than displacing them. That's why we also support the administration's priority to ensure all people in the U.S. can access the vaccine, regardless of their immigration status.

Thank you again for your leadership during this time of domestic and global crisis. We at Airbnb stand ready as a committed partner to the federal government in creating and implementing policy solutions to support our country and protect public health. Together, with collective public and private efforts and the resilient strength of the American people, I am confident we will overcome, recover, and rebuild toward a world where anyone can belong anywhere.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Christopher Lehane  
Senior Vice President for Global Policy & Communications  
Airbnb

CC: Mr. Jeff Zients, White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator  
Congresswoman Terri Sewell, Chair, Congressional Rural Caucus  
Governor Andrew Cuomo, Chair, National Governors Association  
Mayor Greg Fischer, President, U.S. Conference of Mayors

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<sup>6</sup> <https://news.airbnb.com/rural-airbnb-hosts-in-the-u-s-earned-316-million-in-2018>