



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

January 28, 2021

Dear Governor Hogan,

We are writing today to thank you for your recent conversation with County Executive Marc Elrich and your announcement of 18,825 vaccine doses for our shared constituents. We hope that you will continue to increase the number of vaccines sent to Montgomery County, and to help improve the coordination and equity in the rollout of the COVID vaccine. We appreciate your leadership on vaccine rollout and understand that the current federal supply and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine is unacceptable. We know the 70,000 to 75,000 doses the State is receiving are not adequate. We are hopeful that the Biden Administration's promise to declare war on the coronavirus and the President's commitment to release more vaccine to the states along with the Federal Government purchase of more vaccine will result in big improvements soon.

We hope that you will continue to meet with County Executive Elrich. We are offering to meet with you or Acting Secretary Schrader either at one of our Council sessions or at another time. We will continue to invite the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to participate in our virtual town halls.

We are sharing the following requests and concerns.

Distribution of Vaccine

As you have recognized, our County Health Department has been highly successful at getting vaccines into arms. While we appreciate that you allocated 18,825 total first doses to county organizations this week, the number of first doses that came to the County Health Department declined. We have gone from receiving 8,600 first doses the week of January 5 to receiving 5,500 first doses this week.

Montgomery County is well prepared to receive an increasing number of first doses each week. It would be especially helpful to have a known minimum the County Health Department can expect to receive each week (preferably no less than the week before). We are committed to administering all first doses by the time the following week's shipment arrives.

We also ask that if you find one of the other vaccinators in the County is not using their doses, do not reduce the total amount coming to the County, but redirect them to the County Health Department. Your message to hospitals that they will not be prioritized for additional vaccine if they fall short of 75% utilization is on target, but if you find this is the case in Montgomery County, please redirect the vaccine to the Health Department.

Coordination among Vaccinators

We appreciate your announcement to widen the number of vaccinators to serve our residents, but a coordinated system is crucial. Residents are confused about where they should sign up - through the County website, the Giant, Adventist Healthcare, Holy Cross, Johns Hopkins, Medstar, Kaiser, or all of them. Many are frantic to receive the vaccine and are shopping multiple sites and unfortunately, this leads to problems. A healthy 66-year-old should not be able to get a vaccine before an 83-year-old because they managed to get through to a local Giant pharmacy. All the vaccinators in the County should be working together with the same priorities and one unified place to sign up.

Equity

It is critical that we get the vaccine to our most impacted communities, including people of color whom we now know are more likely to test positive and face a higher risk of death. Targeting these high impact zip codes where community spread is higher will also help reduce new cases and help us control spread overall.

The need to intentionally address inequities is evident in the data on people who had pre-registered online as of January 24. In Montgomery County, 19% of COVID cases are Black/African Americans and 40% Hispanic/Latino. Eighteen percent (18%) of deaths are Black/African Americans and 20% Hispanic/Latino. Yet, of the more than 95,000 residents that have pre-registered for a vaccine online, 71% are White, 14% are Asian or Pacific Islander, 7% are Hispanic/Latino, and 6% are Black/African American.

We hope that the State and County can partner to allocate and administer vaccine through equitable channels by reaching out to communities through our networks and assisting them to get pre-registered.

Currently, we are outreaching to our most impacted communities to ensure that they have the opportunity to pre-register. The PrepMod system allows first-come-first-serve access, disregarding the priorities that you have set for vaccination, and disadvantaging persons with limited online access or skills. We would welcome an opportunity to work with the State to have a coordinated sign-up process that will ensure that access to vaccines does not perpetuate healthcare disparities.

Schools and Childcare

We all want our public schools to re-open. We appreciate that a portion of the 8,775 doses allocated to Suburban/Hopkins are for teachers and staff. We need the State to increase this amount. Montgomery County Public Schools has over 24,000 employees. About 56%, or 13,440, are teachers and about 40%, or 9,600, are support staff. Montgomery County Public Schools has been and continues to work on a priority vaccination plan with the County Health Department. Within this group we ask that the staff of licensed childcare providers be included. As schools reopen in-school education childcare will be vital to our success.

Technology - Fixing Problems with PrepMod

The PrepMod system was not built for the unusual circumstances of this pandemic. Unlike flu, the vaccine is scarce, it needs to be prioritized, and it needs to be limited to sequential groups of prioritized residents in specific counties. At the same time, we must have a system that makes appointments, tracks vaccines, and lets people know when it is time for the second dose.

Can the State add safeguards to the PrepMod System that would prohibit people from signing up for an appointment unless they live in the County where the clinic is being held and prevent people from registering with links that have been passed around by e-mails and list serves? At minimum we need strong language telling people that their appointments will not be honored

unless they received the link directly from the county, hospital or pharmacy – not from a neighbor, co-worker for other people who may be passing it along with the best of intentions. It was very unfortunate and upsetting to have people show up for a vaccination at our Quince Orchard clinic and then have to and turn them away – even if they shouldn't have registered. It makes them angry and it undermines everyone's faith in the ability of government to roll out vaccines.

CVS/Walgreens contracts (transparency and accountability)

The County does not have any way to determine when and if all nursing homes, assisted living, DDA group homes, and other congregate settings are being vaccinated. The County should be provided with a schedule of vaccination clinics and the results of each clinic. There are reports that not all group homes or providers are known to CVS or Walgreens. The County is not able to monitor or tell people when a pharmacy is scheduled for a nursing home.

The County received a spreadsheet that showed the partnership assignment between facility and pharmacy but no proactive information on the progress of vaccinations. The County outbreak investigators do collect vaccination information for facilities that are in outbreak status but do not have any data from facilities that do not have any active outbreaks. The County has been told that CVS/Walgreens reports vaccination data to MDH but this is not shared with the county. MD Alert sent out a message saying that all nursing homes in Maryland have been vaccinated. The County cannot confirm this and does not have information on follow-up clinics and second doses.

In addition to your response to this letter about the vaccine, we are hoping that a representative from the Maryland Department of Health can join the Council on **Tuesday, February 9th between 10:00 and noon for our weekly COVID Update to specifically talk about nursing homes and vaccinations for people with developmentally disabilities and their support professionals and caregivers.** With regard to nursing homes, we want to clarify and discuss the roles and responsibilities for inspections and remediation of deficiencies related to COVID inspections. In both cases the Council wants to understand how the State is overseeing the CVS/Walgreens contract to maximize the number of residents and staff that are vaccinated, and how the County can get information about those who decline vaccinations to reach out with additional education on the vaccine.

C: Acting Secretary Schrader, Maryland Department of Health (MDH)
 Deputy Secretary Chan, Public Health Service, MDH
 Deputy Secretary Ye, Health Policy, MDH
 Senator Craig Zucker, Chair, MC Senate Delegation
 Delegate Marc Korman, Chair, MC House Delegation
 County Executive Marc Elrich
 Melanie Wenger, Director, MC Office of Intergovernmental Relations



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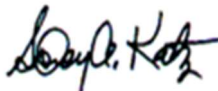
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