

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 29, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear President Biden,

As legislation is developed to support the Biden-Harris Administration vaccination plan, we strongly urge that the Department Health and Human Services prioritize underserved and historically disadvantaged communities by streamlining vaccine distribution through municipalities rather than state governments.

We are inspired by the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to vaccinate 150 million Americans in 100 days in this new phase of our fight against COVID-19. In order to meet the moment and overcome this public health crisis, future distribution plans must explicitly include vaccines and vaccine resources for large cities and counties. By implementing the National Vaccination Distribution Plan, as proposed by the 23 mayors in the letter attached, the Administration can capitalize on cities' abilities to quickly mobilize vaccine administration, particularly among minority and disadvantage citizens, by using their logistical expertise in deploying other municipal services.

While traditional health care systems undoubtedly play a critical role in long-term vaccination plans, city governments can be utilized to fill crucial coverage gaps and ensure that all Americans have reliable access to the vaccine. Nation-wide vaccination efforts require a large amount of coordination and planning that states have struggled to manage with little federal direction. During the January 26, 2021 press briefing, Press Secretary Jen Psaki noted that the Biden Administration must consider every variable and plan for multiple logistical failures such as faulty vaccine storage or broken supply chains, and it must be recognized that city governments have many qualities that will make them critical partners in remedying similar obstacles. Not only are they flexible in nature, but they also have established streamlined COVID-19 testing infrastructures and are equipped with specific expertise about their unique communities.

Throughout this pandemic, large cities and counties have proven that they are capable mechanisms to deliver pandemic aid. Early last year, Los Angeles, California, was able to independently test 3.5 million people. Similarly, Seattle, Washington, mobilized firefighters who were able to provide 20 percent of the state's testing, despite Seattle only having 10 percent of Washington's total population. This is not a new phenomenon, and cities have mobilized effectively to combat other historic public health crises. In 1947, New York City was able to administer five million smallpox vaccines in roughly two weeks.

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Prioritizing equitable distribution also recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic is not just a health crisis. It is also a health equity crisis. As a result of their disproportionate representation in the essential workforce, communities of color are more likely to catch, become hospitalized with, and die from COVID-19 within a health care system that has historically abused them. Cities have a relationship with their communities that allow them to connect with trusted leaders who know how to reach people who otherwise would be overlooked or left out by the traditional health care system. Without local expertise, we risk failing to address the crisis where it is hitting our people the hardest.

City governments will be critical partners in administering these vaccines to continually overlooked communities. Future vaccine distribution must grant large cities and counties direct access to the vaccine supply and vaccine-related infrastructure in order to deliver the care and protection that every American deserves.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. Attached for your further consideration of this request is a copy of the letter from 23 cities across the country seeking direct distribution from the federal government.

Sincerely,



Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

/s/

Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

/s/

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

/s/

Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

/s/

Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress

/s/

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

/s/

Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

/s/

Shelia Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/

Al Green  
Member of Congress

/s/

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

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/s/  
Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

/s/  
André Carson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ann Kirkpatrick  
Member of Congress