

CONGRESSWOMAN MARILYN STRICKLAND
10TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2021

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
395 E St SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Director Walensky,

Thank you for your work supporting vaccine distribution nationwide. As you continue to assess Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) policies, I urge you to update allocation recommendations for states to prioritize adults 50 and older in multigenerational homes.

Since COVID-19 vaccines became available, over 109 million doses have been administered nationwide. States, local health authorities, and the federal government have worked intentionally to allocate shots to those with the greatest need. Unfortunately, the racial breakdown of shot allocations is startling. Black Americans comprise 13.4 percent of the United States population but have only received 6.5 percent of the vaccine doses. Additionally, the U.S. population is 18.5 percent Hispanic/Latino, and yet this population has only received 8.7 percent of doses. American Indian/Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander are vaccinated at similar rates to the demographic share of the population, while white Americans are slightly overrepresented in vaccine distribution, having received 64 percent of vaccine doses while comprising 60 percent of the population. The disparities in vaccine allocation by race demonstrates a continued need to emphasize equity as vaccine distribution continues.

After fighting the COVID-19 pandemic for over a year, it is clear that people of color are disproportionately harmed by COVID-19. Black Americans are more likely to contract COVID-19 than white Americans, nearly three times as likely to be hospitalized from COVID-19 infection and almost twice as likely to die from the virus. Similarly, Latinos are more than three times as likely to be hospitalized and over two times as likely to die as white Americans. Due to underlying conditions such as barriers to health care and exposure to the virus related to occupation, people of color are at greater risk of harm from COVID-19. The fact that vaccination rates are lower for these demographic groups further exacerbates the problem.

Multigenerational households are homes with family members from two or more adult generations or including both grandparents and grandchildren under the age of 25. In 2016, 64 million Americans, or 20 percent of the U.S. population, lived in multigenerational homes; when analyzed by race and ethnicity, the Pew Research Center found that 29 percent of Asian American/Pacific Islanders, 27 percent of Hispanics/Latinos, and 26 percent of Black Americans

live in multigenerational homes. Comparatively, only 16 percent of white families live in multigeneration households. Since the start of the pandemic, keeping older relatives safe in family homes has been a concern for many, especially in communities of color.

We recognize the work the CDC is doing on multiple fronts to increase equitable access to the vaccine, but more can be done. For this reason, we urge the CDC to include adults age 50 and older in multigenerational homes in CDC recommended vaccine allocation metrics. The state of Washington includes this category of individuals in its Phase 1b tier 1 because this protects some of our most vulnerable communities. By updating the CDC guidance accordingly, the CDC will better protect seniors and improve upon its goals of meeting equity in vaccine distribution.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this request. We stand ready to assist as you continue your work on behalf of our constituents.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress