



CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS  
117<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

February 4, 2021

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
Chairman, National Governors Association  
444 North Capitol Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001

The Honorable Asa Hutchinson  
Vice-Chairman, National Governors Association  
444 North Capitol Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Chairman Cuomo and Vice-Chairman Hutchinson,

We write to you concerning the updated interim recommendations for federal, state, and local jurisdictions for coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination program planning and implementation, which includes the prioritization of food and agriculture workers in the next phase of COVID-19 vaccine allocation. The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) believes that it is critical for federal, state, territorial, tribal, local governments, and partners to work together to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are distributed according to public health equity principles. Therefore, we encourage governors to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) new guidance and distribute vaccines to frontline workers, including food and agriculture workers, in Phase 1b and Phase 1c of COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Doing so would not only help stop the spread of COVID-19 but would ensure critical economic, educational, and social activities resume.

As you may know, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) advises the CDC on population groups and circumstances for vaccine use. On December 20<sup>th</sup>, ACIP developed interim recommendations for Phase 1b and Phase 1c of COVID-19 vaccine allocation taking into consideration evidence related to epidemiology, vaccination program implementation, and ethical principles.<sup>1</sup> New interim guidance recommends distribution to frontline essential workers, including those in the food and agriculture industry – such as meat and poultry processing workers, farm workers, grocery store workers, produce

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm695152e2.htm?s\\_cid=mm695152e2\\_x](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm695152e2.htm?s_cid=mm695152e2_x)

packing workers, and warehouse workers – who continue to be disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted long-standing health, economic, and social inequities that continue to disproportionately impact Latinos and other communities of color. Research conducted by the CDC found that Latino workers employed in food production or agriculture had a substantially higher prevalence of COVID-19 compared to non-Hispanic workers in those industries.<sup>3</sup> For example, Latinos account for 37% of workers in the food production and agriculture industries but they make up over 73% of confirmed COVID-19 cases in these industries.<sup>4</sup> At the national level, estimates suggest that more than 460,000 farm workers and farmers are likely to have contracted COVID-19.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, COVID-19 outbreaks in meat and poultry processing facilities have been found to disproportionately impact Latinos, who account for more than half (56%) of reported COVID-19 cases with race/ethnicity data.<sup>6</sup> Given the nature of the work and the urgency to understand how best to reach workers in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways, collaboration with farm workers, food production workers, and community-based organizations will be crucial to any State Vaccination Plan.

As we face unprecedented health and economic challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we have the opportunity to rebuild our country in an equitable way that meets the needs of frontline essential workers who have been bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent data shows that Latinos are receiving the COVID-19 vaccine in significantly lower rates than White people pointing to the urgent need to identify and strengthen partnerships with Latino communities at the federal, local, and state level.<sup>7</sup> To ensure an effective public health response, it is critical that governors implement CDC’s guidance on the equitable allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine in a non-discriminatory manner. People who are at heightened risk of getting infected and dying from COVID-19 should be prioritized. Now more than ever it is critical that the lifesaving COVID-19 vaccine be provided regardless of immigration status or health insurance status to stop the spread of the coronavirus and ensure we successfully recover from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as quickly and safely as possible.

We recognize the challenges faced by governors as you continue leading vaccine distribution and administration efforts, such as increased federal support, coordination among different entities, hiring additional workforce, and providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services.<sup>8</sup> As such, the CHC looks forward to working closely with you to ensure that frontline essential workers and Latinos receive the COVID-19 vaccine in a safe, effective, and timely manner. We ask that

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> [https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/27/1/20-3821\\_article](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/27/1/20-3821_article)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> [https://ag.purdue.edu/agecon/Pages/FoodandAgVulnerabilityIndex.aspx?\\_ga=2.255761480.1772579111.1609788790-1293022503.1600968173](https://ag.purdue.edu/agecon/Pages/FoodandAgVulnerabilityIndex.aspx?_ga=2.255761480.1772579111.1609788790-1293022503.1600968173)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6927e2.htm?s\\_cid=mm6927e2\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6927e2.htm?s_cid=mm6927e2_w)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2021/01/25/skepticism-and-mistrust-challenge-covid-vaccine-uptake-for-latinos/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Supporting-an-Equitable-Distribution-of-COVID-19-Vaccine.pdf>

you give this letter all fair and full consideration within all the applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Sincerely,



Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Chair  
Congressional Hispanic Caucus

Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján  
United States Senator

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
First Vice-Chair  
Congressional Hispanic Caucus

Adriano Espaillat  
Second Vice-Chair  
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Darren Soto  
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Teresa Leger Fernandez  
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Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
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Norma J. Torres  
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Jim Costa  
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Salud Carbajal  
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Veronica Escobar  
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