



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Acting Secretary

February 9, 2021

The Hon. Wilbur Leventgood
President, Maryland Association of Counties (MACo)
169 Conduit Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Hon. Laura Price
First Vice President, MACo
169 Conduit Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear President Leventgood and County Leaders:

Thank you for your correspondence to Governor Larry Hogan, dated February 8, 2021, on behalf of your respective local jurisdictions regarding your suggestions for COVID-19 vaccine allocation. As Acting Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), I am pleased to respond.

Local health departments now account for roughly 35% of the state's vaccinations, and we appreciate the important role they play as part of the vaccine distribution network. Each week, state health officials provide full transparency to county health departments on the allocations that each of their counterparts and their hospital systems receive. Consistent with the federal administration's plan, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, and advice from leading medical experts, we are expanding our network of vaccine distribution points to include mass vaccination sites and retail neighborhood pharmacies. Residents in at least 22 of our 24 jurisdictions have already signed up for appointments at the new Six Flags America mass vaccination site, and we look forward to serving them.

Following the recommendations from federal and state scientists and our plan, Maryland has gone from administering 2,000 shots in December to nearly 25,000 shots per day as of this week, but supply remains our single biggest limiting factor. Earlier today, on a call with White House officials, the Governor pressed federal administration officials to take additional steps to increase supply and get more makers of vaccines online.

In addition, the Governor has asked us to address your suggestions:

1. Share Weekly Vaccine Allocation Projections.

Maryland makes and shares its vaccine allocations based on the information given to us by the federal administration. Prior to this week, the federal administration has provided us notice of our weekly allocation about one week prior, often with a change in allocation in between our initial notice and when we receive final order confirmation.

In previous weeks, Maryland has received notice, typically late Tuesday, and finalized its order by late Thursday. By Friday morning, we usually receive federal confirmation of our orders. In several instances, we have not had final confirmation or had additional federal adjustments that required our staff to work through the weekend to finalize Maryland's order. As soon as we have final confirmation, we make our COVID-19 vaccine providers, including county health departments, aware.

Beginning this week, the federal administration has released a two-week look ahead. We are evaluating these numbers and look forward to releasing more information based on our confirmation of the federal data. We agree with you that it would be helpful for planning purposes across all providers to know what is coming down the pipeline, and it is a concern we have consistently raised with the federal administration. As soon as we are able to validate the initial federal projections, we hope to be able to give longer-term projections and to follow-up with a confirmed federal order as soon as possible.

2. Publish Private Provider Allocations by Distribution Site.

As stated on numerous occasions, Maryland's goal is to provide each jurisdiction with its pro-rata percentage share of doses by population across all providers, with adjustments for providers who are efficient at vaccine administration and who comply with the state's vaccine priority directives. We encourage every provider to follow the state's vaccine priorities.

Currently, there are 51 retail pharmacy partner sites in Maryland operating through the Federal Pharmacy Transfer program. Each pharmacy is being allocated approximately 200 doses each week. In the coming days, the Biden administration will activate the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program and provide doses to several pharmacies directly from the federal administration. These neighborhood pharmacies that people know and trust are an important component of both the federal and state distribution plan to expand access, equity, and consumer choice.

3. Fulfill Local Health Department Weekly Requests Before Allocating Doses to Private Providers or State Sites.

Recently, local health departments collectively submitted requests for more than 94,000 doses, a collective request far exceeding the total allocation the state receives from the federal administration. Certain individual jurisdictions have requested as many as 20,000 vaccines in a single week alone - a request that would be impossible to fulfill given our allocation from the federal administration. As noted above, Maryland's goal is to provide each geographic jurisdiction with its percentage share of doses by population, with adjustments for providers who are efficient at vaccine administration and who comply with the state's vaccine priority directives.

4. Coordinate Efforts within Local Jurisdictions.

We coordinate on a daily and ongoing basis with all COVID-19 vaccine providers. The administration holds weekly calls with county and municipal leadership, MDH holds multiple weekly calls with local health departments, and MDH releases a detailed bulletin to all COVID-

19 vaccine providers each week which supplies the latest operational and policy guidance on vaccination matters and is posted on the MDH website. You can view the current bulletin [here](#).

As part of our comprehensive COVID-19 vaccination distribution strategy, we want to ensure that all individuals in a jurisdiction have equal access to COVID-19 vaccine, in line with federal guidance. We urge you to streamline your guidelines as much as possible.

5. Release Funding.

Governor Hogan announced more than \$123.2 million in funding to support Maryland's local health departments on February 4, including dedicated vaccination funding and support to address local budget shortfalls. For more information, [please see the news release](#).

MDH has been working cooperatively with our local health department partners, including holding meetings three times a week and being available to take calls almost 24/7. We thank each local health department employee for their hard work and dedication over the past year in our whole-of-state COVID-19 response and look forward to working with them to vaccinate Marylanders as efficiently and equitably as possible.

We urge every county leader to work with us cooperatively, and we look forward to having further productive discussions as vaccine production and allocation increases.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis R. Schrader".

Dennis R. Schrader
Secretary (Acting)