



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

February 8, 2021

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Anthony G. Brown
U.S. House of Representatives
1323 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
U.S. House of Representatives
2206 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Trone
U.S. House of Representatives
1213 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kweisi Mfume
U.S. House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
U.S. House of Representatives
431 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the Maryland Congressional Delegation:

Thank you for your correspondence dated February 2. The vast majority of the issues you raise have been provided in previous briefing materials and publicly available documents, several of which are enclosed for your reference.

However, I did want to share some information on several points that I was surprised to learn you appear unaware of:

You reference “private partnerships” and “contracts between the State and any private sector partners.” Assuming that you are referencing the vaccinations occurring in local Giant Foods, WalMart, Safeway and RiteAid pharmacies across the state, these partnerships are facilitated through the CDC’s Pharmacy Transfer Program and the “contracts” in question are with the federal government, not the state. It is surprising that you are unaware of this federal program.

I was equally perplexed by your inquiry regarding the state’s decision to open eligibility to Marylanders over 65 in groups 1B and 1C. This action was undertaken at the express urging of President Biden, his administration’s infectious disease experts, and leading experts from the previous administration. On January 8, I met with former CDC director Dr. Robert Redfield at the Maryland State House where he strongly advocated for states to open eligibility to priority groups in Phases 1B and 1C, a call that was echoed by the White House Coronavirus Task Force, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, days later.

On January 14, I received a phone call from then President-elect Biden’s top COVID-19 advisor, Jeff Zients, who informed me that the President-elect would be appealing to states to open vaccine eligibility to individuals in groups 1B and 1C in a primetime address to the nation that evening. He encouraged Maryland to heed the call. We made the decision to continue to follow guidance from scientific experts, as we have throughout the pandemic, and expand eligibility with the knowledge that the supply was not yet sufficient to meet the demand.

President Biden spoke eloquently on this issue in his address to the nation that evening. The following is an excerpt from his remarks:

“We’ll fix the problem by encouraging States to allow more people to get vaccinated beyond healthcare workers and move through those groups as quickly as they think we can. That includes anyone, 65 years or older. A population that has accounted for over 80% of the deaths today, 80% of the deaths to date. We’re all set to continue vaccinating frontline, essential workers like educators, first responders, grocery store workers, et cetera. It won’t mean that everyone in this group will get vaccinated immediately, as the supply is not where it needs to be.”

Our planning, decision-making, and public messaging on this issue has been in lockstep with President Biden’s COVID-19 plan and CDC guidance.

How did you not know this? Given that both the creation of the pharmacy transfer program and the recommendation to open vaccinations to individuals over 65 are actions taken at the federal level, I respectfully suggest that you address your apparent concerns to the President and his team.

You mention a ‘course correction.’ The course we are on has brought Maryland from 2,000 shots per day to over 22,000 shots per day in a matter of weeks. We have grown from our first delivery to 15 providers to more than 2,000 distribution points across our state. On Friday, mass vaccination sites launched in

Prince George's County and Baltimore City, with additional regional sites opening in the coming weeks. Last month, we launched a statewide grassroots education campaign and the Maryland Vaccine Equity Task Force.

We will not rest until every Marylander who wants a vaccine can get a vaccine. You can be a part of this incredible undertaking, or you can criticize it from the cloakroom.

The only way we will accomplish this goal - which I believe we share - is to get more vaccines flowing into Maryland from the federal government. As the vaccine is a federal asset, you are uniquely situated to assist in our endeavors to push for ramped up production and efficient review of additional vaccine candidates - I'm asking for your help to ensure the federal government is pursuing all possible avenues and strategies to increase supply.

As noted previously, I have enclosed communications distributed by the governor's office, the Maryland Department of Health, and the federal administration that address the questions posed in your letter. To mitigate any further confusion I humbly suggest you direct your staff to spend more time reading these informative and regularly distributed materials and briefing you on their contents as opposed to writing press releases disguised as letters. Our team needs to devote their time to getting shots into Marylanders' arms.

Maryland families simply don't have time to play Washington politics. It will continue to take all of us working together to keep Marylanders safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Hogan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" and last name "Hogan" clearly distinguishable.

Larry Hogan
Governor

Enclosures:

Fact Sheet: President-elect Biden Outlines COVID-19 Vaccination Plan:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/15/fact-sheet-president-elect-biden-outlines-covid-19-vaccination-plan/>

Letter from Dr. Robert Redfield to Governors:

<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Governors-open-letter3.pdf>

CDC Pharmacy Transfer Program FAQ:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/retail-pharmacy-program>

Press Release: Governor Hogan Announces Expansion of COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility for Marylanders 65 and Over:

<https://governor.maryland.gov/2021/01/14/governor-hogan-announces-expansion-of-covid-19-vaccine-eligibility-for-marylanders-65-and-over/>

Press Release: State of Maryland Launches Public Outreach and Equity Campaign to Promote Vaccine Confidence:

<https://governor.maryland.gov/2021/01/29/state-of-maryland-launches-public-outreach-and-equity-campaign-to-promote-vaccine-confidence/>

Press Release: Mass Vaccination Sites Open Tomorrow in Prince George's County and Baltimore City:

<https://governor.maryland.gov/2021/02/04/mass-vaccination-sites-open-tomorrow-in-prince-georges-county-and-baltimore-city/>

Each week, the Maryland Department of Health releases a bulletin to all COVID-19 vaccine providers which supplies the latest operational and policy guidance on vaccination matters and is posted on the MDH website. These bulletins have addressed many of your questions. Current bulletin:

<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Documents/2021.02.05%20-%20MDH%20Notice%20-%20Bulletin%20COVID%2019%20Vaccine%20Distribution%20Updates%20%28Week%209%29.pdf>