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CRYSTAL HYPOLITE  
LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

January 28, 2021

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan  
Governor  
State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

On behalf of the Prince George's County House Delegation, I offer this letter of concern regarding both the COVID vaccine allocation and administration status for Prince George's County, with the goal of immediately activating a more robust working dynamic with the state. Given the disparity in vaccine allocation and administration, it is critical that we secure additional state resources and assistance to increase the rates to those in most need and where it will achieve the greatest impact.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Prince George's County has suffered the greatest adverse impact from COVID with cases and deaths that far exceed any of the other counties. Since March, the county has had 65,628 confirmed cases, 6,705 hospitalized and 1,175 deaths. Our county has the largest population, at sixty-seven percent, for minorities of color who have the greatest risks for death related to COVID. Historical inadequacies and disparities in access to health care, stemming from years of systemic bias in the health care delivery system, have rendered most of our population without primary care providers and adequate access entry points for quality health care delivery. In addition, we must overcome increased vaccine hesitancy in our population and overall mistrust in vaccine necessity related to a legacy of abuse toward our black population in historical vaccine development practices.

First, in terms of vaccine allocation it appears from preliminary data our county received somewhere between ten and eleven percent of the available vaccines. Given that our county population represents at least 15% of the state, at a minimum going forward we seek to receive at

least 15% of state-wide county distributed vaccines. However, we strongly suggest that you provide an amount proportionate to our COVID infection rate, for which we unfortunately represent at least 19% of the state. In addition, as one of the largest counties we have a larger number of teachers and first responders in immediate need that drain what resources we have from the elderly and those in most need. Therefore, we respectfully request increased communication, details, and transparency in your allocation decisions so that we can all manage public expectations through a transparent and equitable distribution process. This dynamic will help ensure the sufficient vaccine is distributed for all prioritized individuals.

Second, in terms of vaccine administration it is painfully evident that Prince County residents are suffering from severe inequitable rates of vaccine administration compared to the rest of the state. In your January 5, 2021 press conference you stated, "I want to assure the people of Maryland that we are going to leverage every resource to get more shots into more arms as quickly as we possibly can, in a safe and orderly way." Accordingly, we are seeking more details on your plan to immediately address the inequities in vaccine administration in our county. We would like to work with you to secure resources for both public and private vaccine administration, with a focus on establishing more access points for vaccine administration in our most impacted communities. At this juncture it is critical that the Delegation work with you in collaboration with key stakeholders such as local governments, providers, health plans, community leaders and the private sector to accomplish an effective and equitable phased vaccine administration campaign for Prince George's County. We are seeking to be an active part of your team and not left to the sidelines during this critical phase for controlling the spread of COVID.

As part of your team, while there are a myriad of potential solutions we want to work with you on we offer the following suggestions for immediate attention: increased coordinated activation of the medical reserve core; increase use of the national guard; state leadership in entering private sector contracts for assistance in our local supermarkets, drug stores, and independent pharmacies; activation of mobile delivery units; increased strategic media campaign, including television and radio, directed at vaccine hesitancy; coordination with places of worship for administration sites and volunteers; expedient roll-out to primary care providers; coordination with large health care delivery systems such as University of Maryland and Doctor's Hospital; increased access to drive thru local access points.

Third, we remain concerned that you previously indicated that state health officials have issued an order, which states that any facility that has not administered at least 75% of their total first dose allocation may have their future allocations reduced until they can prove their ability to meet capacity. We firmly believe it would be unjust to reduce Prince George's County's future allocations based on the struggles we are currently experiencing in vaccine administration.

As you struggled many times in your tenure as Chair of the National Governor's Association with the prior federal Administration requiring each state to fend for themselves in acquiring COVID needed PPE, with each state having varying capacity to succeed, we are struggling with your Administration's vaccine deployment to individual counties with each having a varying capacity to succeed. This last week has indicated that we need increased leadership, cooperation and assistance from your Administration given the unique needs of our county.

Immediate increased assistance to our large jurisdiction is not only necessary for our community, but also for the state's overall economic well-being. Prince George's economic recovery, which the state budget is highly dependent on, cannot succeed without successful vaccine administration with rates comparable to our neighboring jurisdictions.

In closing, in your January 5, 2021 press release you deemed these vaccine efforts "the greatest peacetime undertaking in American history, and will be a massive, all-hands-on-deck, on going operation between the federal, state and local governments and private sector." The Prince George's Delegation is seeking at this critical juncture to be part of your "all-hands-on-deck" call with our county government and we need your immediate attention to improve our rate of vaccine administration and improve public trust in a fair and transparent vaccine distribution and administration protocol.

*Sincerely,*



*Delegate Erek. L. Barron*

*Chair, Prince George's County House Delegation*