

February 12, 2021

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

We write with urgency and alarm regarding the inadequate supply of COVID-19 vaccine allocated to municipalities within Barnstable County. As elected and appointed officials at the state, municipal, and county level, we can tell you that the situation on the ground is untenable and must change.

Cape Cod may be Massachusetts' most distinctive peninsula, but it is also the oldest county by age in the Commonwealth and the oldest county in New England. According to the 2019 American Community Survey data for Barnstable County, 13% of our population is aged 75 and older (27,666 residents), and nearly 17% is aged 65 to 74 (35,915 residents) – percentages more than twice that of the rest of the state. Since you extended vaccination into Phase 2, our shared constituents over the age of 75 have had to navigate a vaccination registration process where the fittest and most tech savvy get access to a vaccine and those more vulnerable are left out. A difficult to decipher website and a well-intentioned but overburdened 2-1-1 call system may work when vaccines are available in your community, but when the burden of scheduling a vaccination includes having to find transportation to a site over an hour's drive away, it becomes an immense hardship.

Demand for the vaccine and reliable information about accessing the vaccine on Cape Cod is very high. A hotline established by Barnstable County has received over 22,000 calls since its inception on January 19th. On February 3, the Cape Cod COVID-19 Response Task Force hosted a tele-town hall, where over 13,000 unique dials stayed on an hour-long call. Each of us have received hundreds of emails and calls with urgent pleas for help from constituents who cannot drive to Gillette Stadium or Dartmouth, who do not have access to internet or a computer, and/or who do not have friends and family nearby who are able to help arrange an appointment or help with transportation.

To date, approximately 22,000 doses of vaccine have been provided to Barnstable County, Cape Cod Healthcare, community health centers, and two municipalities. While 11.7% of Barnstable County residents have received the first dose of the vaccination, we worry this does not capture how many more adults over 75 there are in our communities. We will need 55,000 doses to vaccinate all Cape Codders aged 75 and older, assuming use of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. This is a steep challenge, especially given the Commonwealth's focus on an off-Cape mass vaccination program.

We urgently request your swift action on the following:

- Establish a mass vaccination site at Cape Cod Community College, as discussed but never executed by your Administration. We are disappointed in your decision to forgo a state funded mass vaccination site on Cape Cod and urge reconsideration.
- An increased allocation of vaccine to Barnstable County. The County has executed regional vaccine clinics in Eastham, Falmouth, Hyannis, and Orleans to date, with plans for a site in Truro in two weeks. However the County is only receiving 975 doses a week, although it is currently the only provider of large scale vaccination in the region. To execute these vaccination sites in a predictable way, the County needs a consistent and predictable supply of vaccine.
- Delivery of vaccine to a consortium of local boards of health in Barnstable County. Local boards of health have coordinated with Councils on Aging, police, fire, and other departments in their respective towns to identify the most vulnerable older adults, and are doing so across town boundaries. Municipalities are working with Cape Cod Healthcare, community health centers, and Barnstable County to execute a plan to reach homebound and vulnerable older adults who are not able to access the current vaccine scheme. This consortium is prepared to vaccinate our most vulnerable residents, but we need vaccine to do so.

In the most significant vaccination effort in Massachusetts history, Cape Codders are being left behind. We have worked deliberately and collaboratively as a region to plan to provide vaccination to our residents. We simply need the state to allocate vaccine equitably based on demography. Please help us help ourselves.

Respectfully,

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State Representative
4th Barnstable District

Timothy R. Whelan
State Representative
1st Barnstable District

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