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February 11, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for the leadership you have demonstrated to strengthen the COVID-19 vaccination effort. We share the same goal, which is to manufacture and distribute enough vaccine doses to vaccinate every American as swiftly as possible. Until supply is sufficient to meet demand, we need to make thoughtful choices about how to distribute vaccine doses in the most effective manner in order to save lives.

I write to respectfully request that the federal government consider modifying the formula it uses to allocate COVID-19 vaccine doses among the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the five U.S. territories to more fairly distribute doses to jurisdictions, like Florida, that have relatively large populations of Americans age 65 and older.

Seniors in America are the most likely to die or suffer severe health consequences from COVID-19 and therefore have the most urgent need for the vaccine, alongside frontline workers, educators, and individuals with certain underlying health conditions. My request is simple and rooted in science: adjust the vaccine distribution formula to increase COVID vaccine allotments in states, like Florida, with disproportionately high numbers of seniors.

According to communications from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to Congress, each U.S. jurisdiction is currently allocated vaccine doses “pro rata by population over 18 years old.” This single-factor formula has the benefit of simplicity, but it also has obvious flaws. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Americans age 65 and older account for 81 percent of all COVID-19 deaths in the United States.¹ This is why the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that individuals age 75 and older should be prioritized to receive the vaccine in Phase 1b and individuals ages 65 to 74 should be prioritized in Phase 1c.²

In light of COVID death rates and the CDC’s guidance, the formula used to allocate vaccine doses to U.S. states and territories should take into account, to some meaningful degree, the number of

¹ See https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid_weekly/index.htm.

² See <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm695152e2.htm>.

residents of each jurisdiction who are age 65 and older. This data is readily available from the U.S. Census Bureau and could be easily incorporated into the existing formula.

Florida is one of the jurisdictions most disadvantaged by the current, single-factor formula. Over one in five Florida residents—20.9% of Floridians—is age 65 or older, which trails only Maine and Puerto Rico, where the proportion is 21.3%. Other states with relatively older populations include West Virginia (20.5%), Vermont (20.1%), Delaware (19.5%), and Montana (19.5%).³

Your administration has made great strides to increase the overall allocation of doses to states and territories, to provide more notice to jurisdictions regarding the number of vaccine doses they will receive, and to establish additional vaccination sites. Modifying the current allocation formula to take into account the number of seniors in each jurisdiction would result in a more equitable and conditions-based distribution of the vaccine nationwide.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephanie", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

³ See U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey [here](#).