



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

The Honorable Governor Baker
Office of the Governor
24 Beacon St., Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

March 31, 2021

Dear Governor Baker,

We write to you today as concerned legislators regarding the timeline for eligibility for vaccine for Massachusetts residents. **We respectfully request that you include individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their caregivers in Phase 2 of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccine distribution.**

We appreciate phasing vaccines to prioritize the most vulnerable populations being vaccinated as quickly as possible. This phased approach has been successful in Massachusetts, where at least 68% of the population older than 75 and about 90% of long-term care residents have received vaccines.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely and devastatingly impacted people with I/DD. Over the last year, medical professionals have confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted people living with disabilities. Research shows that I/DD, Autism, Down syndrome, Neurological conditions, and Acquired Brain Injury **all increase an individual's risk of serious complications and death from COVID-19.** In addition, many people with disabilities have experienced difficulty engaging in preventative health measures and disruptions to health services they normally rely on as a result of the pandemic.

Recent studies on the impacts of COVID-19 on individuals with intellectual disabilities have found that **having an intellectual disability is the greatest risk factor**, other than age, associated with COVID-19 deaths. A general lack of COVID-19 data collection on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities means we have yet to accurately capture the true impact the pandemic has had on this population.

Despite ample research indicating the chances of dying from COVID-19 are higher for those with an intellectual disability than they are for people with congestive heart failure, kidney disease or lung disease, the CDC and the Commonwealth's Covid-19 Task Force have failed to prioritize these conditions in the state's vaccination phases. Thus, there is an urgent need to prioritize persons with I/DD for the Covid-19 vaccine.

It is also imperative we prioritize the vaccination of caregivers for persons with I/DD, just as caregivers for the elderly have already been made eligible for vaccination. We have received numerous requests

from our constituents to expand vaccine eligibility to both individuals with I/DD and their caregivers to ensure their safety, keep our communities safe, and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

These compelling findings on the vulnerability of people with I/DD makes it critical that we prioritize them, and their caregivers, to ensure that they can safely get vaccines. Thank you for your consideration of including people with I/DD in Phase 2 of the state's vaccination plan.

Sincerely,

Christine Barber

State Representative
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State Representative
14th Worcester District

Sean Garballey

State Representative
23rd Middlesex District

Paul Donato

State Representative
35th Middlesex District

Michael Day

State Representative
31st Middlesex District

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State Senator
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State Representative
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