

John Joyce, M.D.
13th District of Pennsylvania



Committee on Energy & Commerce

March 4, 2021

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

As we mark a year of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I continue to urge you and your administration to accelerate COVID-19 vaccine distribution equitably across the commonwealth. Rural communities and local health leaders are desperate for increased availability of these safe and effective vaccines, as well as for clear communication about the distribution process. Since my first letter on January 29, the people of Pennsylvania have experienced little improvement in your administration's vaccine operation, which has been continually plagued by avoidable mistakes and miscommunications.

Every day, I hear from Pennsylvanians who are eligible to receive the vaccine but continue to struggle to find an available dose. While I understand the national challenges in vaccine availability, Pennsylvania has failed to stand up an effective operation. Tragically, this beleaguered rollout has hit vulnerable Pennsylvanians the hardest.

Since vaccines first became available following the success of Operation Warp Speed last year, my offices have taken heartbreaking calls from seniors and other vulnerable citizens pleading for help navigating the vaccine distribution process - many lack access to a computer or smartphone, others need guidance on your administration's eligibility guidelines, the majority simply cannot find an available dose.

At the federal level, I continue to advocate for secure supply chains and accelerated production of COVID-19 vaccines. As a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, I am working with fellow lawmakers, scientists, and industry leaders to build on the success of Operation Warp Speed and to exercise oversight over national vaccine distribution.

Every American who wants a vaccine should be able to get one, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania must do its part to get shots into arms.

As we work toward this shared mission, your administration's haphazard communication with local health systems and constant uncertainty about supply shipments are extremely concerning. Confusion about this constantly evolving process and supply shortages that force providers to cancel existing appointments magnify distrust in this system.

Recently, I have learned that multiple rural health care providers in central Pennsylvania have been forced to cancel vaccine clinics. This is a devastating setback for vulnerable Pennsylvanians who are spending hours on the phone attempting to find an available dose, and also for the dedicated health care professionals working around the clock to administer vaccines. I urge you and Acting Secretary Alison Beam to improve your communication with Federally Qualified Health Centers and other vaccine providers about reporting and vaccine availability.

Once again, I ask that you share with my office the following:

- Targets and goals for improving the rate of vaccinations in Pennsylvania
- Timeline for an accelerated distribution of the vaccine
- Plans to ensure equity for rural communities in the distribution
- Plans to clearly communicate with Pennsylvanians about the distribution process

Additionally, I ask that you share with me your plan for communicating with local health care providers about vaccine supply and future availability, as well as for accelerating distribution in rural communities.

The people of Pennsylvania want to get safely back to work and return their children safely back to the classroom. The COVID-19 vaccine is the key to crushing this pandemic, rebuilding our economy, reopening our schools, and restoring our communities.

For the sake of lives and livelihoods, I urge you, Acting Secretary Beam, and your administration to prioritize the efficient and safe distribution of vaccines for all Pennsylvanians. Thank you for your ongoing attention to this matter and I request an expeditious response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Joyce". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Joyce, M.D.
Member of Congress