

February 9, 2021

Office of Governor Ron DeSantis  
State of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis:

I am writing on behalf of Florida's more than 2,000 state-licensed home health agencies related to COVID-19 vaccinations for our front-line clinicians and caregivers. The Home Care Association of Florida (HCAF) represents home health agencies that provide high-quality, cost-effective care in the patient-preferred setting: at home.

Since your December 23, 2020, Executive Order ("EO 20-135") that laid out the first phase of the COVID-19 immunization program — which included "health care personnel with direct patient contact" — home health agencies continue to report that workers are being turned away at vaccine locations across the state due to varying interpretations of the order. A nurse, therapist, or personal care worker caring for patients in the home setting is no different from their counterpart providing care in a facility setting, yet home health workers continue to be a "blind spot" in the immunization program. We respectfully request explicit designation of home health clinicians and caregivers as front-line health care workers and included in EO 20-135.

Home health workers, on a daily basis, frequently go to multiple homes where they have direct patient contact. Our workforce also provides care in other settings, including nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and inpatient hospice facilities. Moreover, home health workers serve approximately 350,000 patients each year who have complex service needs and are at high risk for COVID-19 but might not be able to go to a vaccination site. Workers' inability to access the vaccine has led to growing numbers of these patients declining home health services because clinicians and caregivers have not been vaccinated.

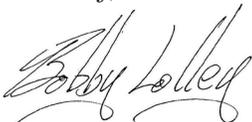
In addition to the high-risk factors of the individuals we serve, many patients have been unable to see family members or leave their homes for any community activities for almost a year. The greater protection that both the workforce and patients receive, the less likely there will be a community spread of the virus and unnecessary hospitalizations. Doing so could make an immense difference in patients' immediate quality of life.

With hospital workers provided unfettered access to the vaccine and pharmacies providing door-to-door vaccinations to long-term care facility workers and residents, we implore you to provide equitable access to home health agencies. By distributing the vaccine directly to home health agencies, it will offer greater protection to our workforce and patients, thereby reducing the likelihood of further community spread of the virus and unnecessary hospitalizations. If this recommendation is not feasible due to shortage issues, providing home health workers with regular ongoing access to the vaccine at county health departments or hospitals (e.g., Daily from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.) would be a desirable alternative.

In closing, home health patients and the workforce who cares for them should be afforded high priority status for access to the vaccine. On behalf of Florida's home health community, thank you for your tireless efforts to protect Florida's health care workforce and the vulnerable patients they serve.

If you have questions, please contact me at (850) 222-8967 or [blolley@homecarefla.org](mailto:blolley@homecarefla.org).

Sincerely,



Bobby Lolley, RN  
Executive Director

cc: Director Jared Moskowitz  
Surgeon General Scott Rivkees  
Interim Secretary Shevaun Harris  
Members of the Florida House of Representatives  
Members of the Florida Senate  
Paul A. Ledford, Florida Hospice & Palliative Care Association  
Home Care Association of Florida Members