

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 28, 2021

Mr. Norris Cochran
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

General Gustave Perna
Chief Operating Officer, Operation Warp Speed
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Acting Secretary Cochran and General Perna:

As the Federal Government continues to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, we write to inquire about Operation Warp Speed's (OWS) distribution efforts to ensure federal employees have access to the COVID-19 vaccine. We have heard from officials with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) that there are 29 federal agencies reporting 40,403 Phase 1-eligible staff in Maryland. We ask that OWS support MDH's request that the Federal Government aid with vaccine allocation for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Our understanding from OWS officials is that five federal agencies are planning to provide vaccination for their employees and people under their care. These agencies are the Indian Health Service, Department of Defense, Veterans Health Administration, Bureau of Prisons, and Department of State. Other federal agencies can access the COVID-19 vaccine through a state or jurisdiction by: (1) enrolling as a provider with the state or jurisdiction so that their clinical staff can vaccinate their workforce; or (2) individual employees can be vaccinated through established state or jurisdictional routes such as vaccination clinics, primary care providers, or pharmacies.

This week we received a copy of a letter (see enclosed) sent to the NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins explaining that the State of Maryland is unable to guarantee any additional future vaccine allocations to NIH as the State begins Phase 1C of its vaccine distribution plan. Thus far, Maryland has provided NIH with 5,600 doses of the Moderna vaccine, and OWS has provided NIH with 4,100 doses. NIH needs an additional 4,636 doses of vaccine to fully vaccinate its 14,336 frontline employees and contractors eligible in Phase 1. Furthermore, the agency has no guaranteed access to any future supply for employees and contractors in Phases 2, 3, or 4.

We would like to ensure that Maryland's population as well as valuable federal employees have equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine. The NIH is a federal agency and the Nation's top research agency serving Americans from around the country. As such, we request that OWS provide NIH with vaccine allocations to accord with continuity of government plans. Such a step will promote confidence in the government's response during this difficult time and assure federal employees that the government is prioritizing their health and well-being.

Maintaining a healthy federal workforce with confidence in the government's commitment to its welfare is of the utmost importance to us. Thank you in advance for your prompt response and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress

/s/ C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

/s/ John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

/s/ Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

/s/ Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/ David Trone
Member of Congress

Cc:

David Kessler, Chief Scientific Adviser, Operation Warp Speed

Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health

Bob Fenton, Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA Administrator

Kathleen McGettigan, Acting Director Office of Personnel Management