



**Congress of the United States**  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

The Honorable Alison Beam  
Acting Secretary of Health  
Pennsylvania Department of Health  
Health & Welfare Building  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor West, 625 Forster  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Acting Secretary Beam,

Over the last several weeks, the Department of Health has made needed improvements to the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine supply is increasing yet Pennsylvania ranks 46<sup>th</sup> among states for the rate of senior citizens who have received at least one dose.<sup>1</sup> I am concerned that the Department's decision to sideline independent pharmacies had a negative impact on vaccine access, especially for underserved and vulnerable populations. I was assured in a call this week that independent pharmacies will resume receiving first dose allocations at some point. I ask the Department to provide clarity on when allocations will resume and to reengage independent pharmacies as soon as possible.

I have heard from independent pharmacies in my district that were negatively affected by the Department's decision to temporarily curtail the number of vaccine providers. Many independent pharmacies had already vaccinated thousands of eligible individuals and diligently adhered to the Department's guidelines. These providers have had to cancel thousands of appointments for individuals who are eager to be vaccinated, creating long waiting lists without any indication as to when they will receive additional doses. This high level of uncertainty disproportionately affects eligible senior citizens, many of whom have existing relationships with these pharmacies and may experience unnecessary obstacles finding and accessing an alternative provider.

Independent pharmacies have earned their local reputation through years, and often generations, serving a community. Several states and Philadelphia, a separate vaccine jurisdiction from the Commonwealth, have had notable success engaging independent pharmacies to increase access and promote equitable vaccine distribution.<sup>2</sup> While I can appreciate the need to be strategic in allocating doses, it is critical that independent pharmacies be reengaged as vaccine providers for the benefit of the communities they serve. Their previous success and high level of trust and accessibility are reason to resume allocating vaccine doses to them as soon as practicable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Meuser".

DAN MEUSER  
Member of Congress

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/health/2021/03/21/Pennsylvania-health-department-vaccine-rollout-senior-elderly-covid-19-vaccinations-pandemic/stories/202103200048>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.inquirer.com/health/coronavirus/vaccine-pharmacy-philadelphia-covid-dose-equity-20210320.html>