



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John W. Mannion

## Senator Mannion Requests COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization for Individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities

JOHN W. MANNION January 21, 2021

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. COVID-19. VACCINATIONS, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES DISABILITY RIGHTS COVID-19 RESPONSE**



**ALBANY, NY** – State Senator John W. Mannion (D-Geddes,) Chair of the Senate Disabilities Committee, today released the following letter to Governor Cuomo urging COVID-19 vaccine prioritization for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

January 20, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor of New York State

NYS State Capitol Building

Albany, NY 12224

**Re: COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization for Individuals with Disabilities**

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The urgency to vaccinate people from COVID-19 becomes more apparent each day. I recognize the challenge of prioritizing groups of individuals, especially as federal guidance changes on a regular basis. As you consider which populations should be added to the at-risk and immunocompromised group, I urge you to think broader than individuals with traditional medical conditions. As the Chair of the Senate's Disability Committee, I'm asking you to instead please also consider adding people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Although individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities living in group settings were included in Phase 1a of vaccine distribution, this is not enough. Less than 20% of these individuals actually live in congregate homes, meaning many were not eligible. People with disabilities who live independently or with caregivers should also be vaccinated as soon as possible.

Individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities face several challenges related to COVID-19. First, many people struggle with some of the recommendations and guidelines related to social distancing and mask wearing. Additionally, many people with these disabilities are medically frail to begin with. Several of these disabilities are tied to other

medical conditions ranging from respiratory problems, to heart disease, to low muscle tone tied to choking. These comorbidities put people with developmental and intellectual disabilities at a higher risk of death if they contract COVID-19. In fact, studies have shown that people with these types of disabilities are three times more likely to die of COVID-19 than people without disabilities.

Historically, people with developmental and intellectual disabilities have not received equitable medical treatment when resources are scarce. I strongly urge you to alter this past practice and add individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities to the COVID-19 Vaccine Phase 1b group.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any questions. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

John W. Mannion

New York State Senator

Fiftieth Senatorial District