



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John W. Mannion

Senator Mannion Sends Letter to Governor Cuomo Regarding COVID-19 Vaccines

JOHN W. MANNION January 27, 2021

| ISSUE: **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES DISABILITY RIGHTS COVID-19 RESPONSE, CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19; VACCINE DISTRIBUTION**



Dear Governor Cuomo,

It was only decades ago that many fellow citizens living with developmental and intellectual disabilities were all but shunned from larger society and placed in nightmarish institutions, where they were subject to all the cruelties of neglect. I write while thinking of those New Yorkers who lived and were lost under such circumstances, and with a shared belief in our

ongoing commitment to their memory.

Your original designation of people with (I/DD) as a priority population for 1A Covid-19 vaccination represented progress for so many of New York State's residents, too often historically overlooked or neglected before a great movement to protect their civil rights. These same women and men are now especially vulnerable to Covid-19, an urgent moment that calls on us to reverse the way they were so often overlooked historically.

What moment could be more of a pressure test of such a commitment?

While I applaud and understand the original decision to include those living in congregate settings as a prioritized group, this only makes up about a fifth of those living with I/DD in my district. As mentioned in my letter to you on January 21, 2021, I know that much more can be done to ensure the safety and wellbeing of individuals with developmental disabilities during this pandemic.

I recognize the vast challenges posed by the sheer number of New Yorkers at risk who require vaccination, but I write with particular concern about the follow-up with these citizens, living with developmental disabilities, especially as it relates to an emerging and concerning trend; for those who managed to receive vaccinations under earlier mandates, there have been reports of 'second dose' appointments being canceled, followed by an inability to reschedule due to shortages. **I am particularly concerned about such reports of cancelled appointments and I am hopeful that we can prioritize this issue.**

To that end, I write to respectfully request that you consider expanding the vaccination time frame for those with I/DD; 30 days would allow for necessary accommodations in a way that seven days does not. Individuals with I/DD may require assistance in scheduling, transportation, or emotional or behavioral support. For a multitude of reasons, the 7-day vaccination window can result in hurdles that make it all the more difficult for these New Yorkers to receive

vaccination. I wholeheartedly urge consideration for an extension of the timeframe, as it is the right thing to do.

The enormity of this crisis and the daily logistical challenges are not lost on me. However, I believe New York State can serve as an international example of how to guarantee lifesaving equity for a population that historically, in all too many cases, has been overlooked or forgotten. I hope to partner with you in identifying and resolving potential challenges where they exist, not only as a matter of public health but out of consideration for full human and civil rights.

In closing, **I respectfully recommend an extension of the time frame for vaccinating specific and targeted populations, who are not only more likely to require the extra time, but they are also most at-risk without the vaccine. I would also urge that we utilize all necessary staff and resources to identify and focus on the factors contributing to this challenge of New Yorkers with I/DD who are not receiving a second dose.** Based on your initial prioritization of this population, I believe we both feel strongly that our most at-risk populations must be prioritized in receiving both doses of vaccine.

With appreciation for your leadership,

Senator John W. Mannion

50th Senatorial District