



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Samra G. Brouk

Senator Samra Brouk, Senator Jeremy Cooney, and Assemblymember Sarah Clark Demand Extension of Priority COVID-19 Vaccination Appointment Window for Rochester Residents

SAMRA G. BROUK March 2, 2021

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Rochester, NY - Senator Samra Brouk, Senator Jeremy Cooney, and Assemblymember Sarah Clark call for the Governor and the New York State Department of health to extend the priority window for COVID-19 vaccine appointments at the FEMA Kodak Hawkeye site in Rochester by one week. Priority access to the vaccine had previously been limited to those in the Rochester ZIP codes with the lowest rate of vaccinations, but as of tomorrow at 8am, appointments will be accessible to all Monroe County residents. As of March 1st, only 11,000 appointments had been made out of 28,000 available appointments. More time is needed to ensure that equitable, meaningful outreach is completed for those with greatest need.

“Issues with appointment access have been extremely challenging for our most vulnerable residents,” stated Senator Brouk. “From lack of access to technology, to long hold times on the phone, to overcoming transportation barriers, many in our region have not been able to access this life-saving vaccine. My office has been working tirelessly to enroll eligible residents in these appointments, including making hundreds of phone calls and participating in door-to-door outreach efforts with community advocacy groups to provide people with the information they need to get vaccinated. The existing health care system is inequitable, and we need to work harder—including allowing more time to reach residents—to ensure equitable distribution of this vaccine.”

“The Hawkeye site is located in my senate district and is critical for helping the most vulnerable populations access the vaccine,” said Senator Cooney. “Every day, constituents call my office—there is high demand for these vaccinations, but still major barriers exist to access appointments. I used my time during last week’s legislative hearing on health to advocate for an extension from State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker. He never followed up. Our team has made thousands of calls to help residents sign up for these life-saving appointments, but a week is simply not enough time. I am proud to join my colleagues in calling for an extension to this exclusivity period, and I will continue our

efforts to help Rochesterians sign up for vaccinations. This is about equity in our community.”

“Equitable access to this vaccine for Black and brown communities disproportionately affected by this virus has to be our number one priority,” said Assembly Member Sarah Clark. “These marginalized communities bear extraordinary burdens due to gaps in resources, services, and opportunities that the pandemic has only intensified. The lack of access to information about the vaccine, and inaccessibility to vaccine locations has thus far been a major challenge, and the Hawkeye site has not yet had enough time to alleviate these problems. Last Saturday, I was able to canvass and distribute information about the vaccine to residents in my own neighborhood. My zip code has had one of the lowest vaccine recipient rates in the county. I heard an overwhelming response from my neighbors and constituents: they need more time. It is glaringly evident that we must set aside more appointments for residents in these underserved areas.”

Recent data released by New York State showed that vaccination rates in Rochester’s Upper Falls and Marketview Heights neighborhoods were an abysmal 3%, while our east-side suburbs of Brighton and Pittsford boasted a 22% vaccination rate. Furthermore, national reporting has indicated that people of color, particularly Black and Latinx people, are experiencing more serious illness and death due to COVID-19 than white people. Those in our community at the greatest risk of illness should be prioritized in the plans for vaccine distribution, and yet, only one week of priority eligibility was granted for these Rochester residents. Senator Brouk is requesting that an additional week be given for priority enrollment for the Rochester-area ZIP codes with the lowest vaccination rates, including 14605, 14613, 14611, 14608, 14621, 14619, 14606, 14615, 14614, 14609, 14604, and 14603.

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