



Queens' State Senators Hold Roundtable Discussion on the COVID-19 Pandemic and Issues Surrounding the Distribution of the Vaccine in Queens

Delegation Chair Senator Toby Ann Stavisky: The discussion we had with our frontline representatives and the Governor's office was extremely illuminating. We are all encouraged by the presence of the vaccine, but we still have a lot of work to do to ensure it is distributed properly within our communities.

On Friday, the Senate's Queens Delegation held a roundtable discussion with community stakeholders and city and state officials to examine the issues surrounding the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. The delegation chair, **Senator Toby Ann Stavisky**, was joined by **Senator John Liu** (D- 11th District), **Senator Jessica Ramos** (D, WF- 13th District), **Senator Joseph Addabbo** (D- 15th District), **Senator Leroy Comrie** (D- 14th District), **Senator James Sanders Jr.** (D- 10th District), and a representative from Senator Michael Gianaris' office as well as representatives from the Governor's office, NYC Health & Hospitals and various not-for-profit organizations throughout the community. The purpose of the discussion was to shed light on the challenges our health care providers are experiencing in trying to obtain and administer the COVID-19 vaccination.

"We are at the beginning of a very complex logistical and process," explains **Senator Stavisky**. "Right now, our hospitals and not-for-profit organizations are telling us they have more questions than answers as it relates to administering the COVID-19 vaccination. Our sign-up process can be too confusing for many of our older, high risk constituents. We do not know how many doses of the vaccine our community is going to have access to, or when they'll have that access. And, we do not have enough safe sites open for people to get their shots. Quite simply, we need to be answering three basic questions: how, when and where?"

Senator John Liu said, "For weeks constituents have been trying desperately to secure a vaccine for themselves or for an elderly loved one, only to discover chaos, confusion and cancellation in the process. This roundtable highlighted once again how communities all across Queens are underserved even as local hospitals and community service providers are ready willing and able to help vaccinate residents. What's clear is that not only does the federal government need to speed up the supply chain, but the city and state government have to quickly get their ducks in the same row."

Senator James Sanders Jr. said, “The COVID-19 vaccine appears to be safe and our best hope for combating this terrible disease. However, we need to make sure that it is distributed in a fair and equitable manner, especially when it comes to communities of color, which are far too often overlooked. I am deeply concerned about the haphazard approach that has been taken so far. Queens has been the epicenter of this virus and my district had the 2nd highest amount of people dying from coronavirus. We must be designated as a priority area for the vaccine. For our seniors to be waiting in the frigid cold for hours, only to be turned away, is unacceptable. Government must do better.”

Senator Stavisky thanks her colleagues in the Senate, as well as all of the organizations and institutions who took part in the discussion. A full list of participants can be found below:

- **The Office of Governor Andrew Cuomo**
- **NYC Department of Health**
- **NYC Health & Hospitals**
- **Danielle Ellman, Commonpoint Queens**
- **Linda Lee, Korean Community Services**
- **Dr. Ady Oster, Charles B. Wang Community Health Center**
- **Julie Ae Kim, NYC Test and Trace Corps**
- **Dr. Vasundhara Kalasapudi & Mukund Mehta, India Home**
- **Jessica Mendieta, Center for Integration & Advancement of New Americans**