

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C.

February 2, 2021

Acting Secretary Norris Cochran
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Director Rochelle Walensky
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
395 E Street, S.W. Suite 9100
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Cochran and Director Walensky,

We write to you regarding the critical importance of ensuring vulnerable populations are not inadvertently excluded from eligibility for initial allocations of the COVID-19 vaccines. While we understand that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published interim recommendations for vaccine prioritization based on the advice and guidance of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, we are concerned with the lack of direction surrounding vaccinations for those with a history of cancer. We ask that the CDC immediately update their guidance to states to ensure cancer patients are not left out of the initial distribution tiers.

The lack of guidance surrounding vaccine prioritization for high-risk patient populations is concerning, resulting in some states recommending cancer patients be vaccinated early while other states placing them lower on the priority list. We strongly echo the belief of numerous doctors, scientists, and patient advocates in stating that individuals with an increased risk for severe COVID-19 associated illness, like cancer, be among those immediately considered for priority access to the COVID-19 vaccination.

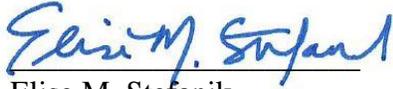
According to the CDC interim recommendation for allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine, those with medical conditions that increase the risk for severe COVID-19, should be considered under Phase 1c of distribution. This is despite mounting evidence that demonstrates individuals with any history of cancer are at a significantly higher risk of a COVID-related death compared to individuals without. There is compelling data showing much worse COVID-19 outcomes for people in active treatment for cancer, yet the advisory committee recommends, and many states continue to place them low on the priority list. The way the CDC recommendations are currently structured, young, and healthy individuals with little risk of contracting the disease in their profession are being prioritized over cancer patients. We find it inexcusable that cancer patients are being turned down from vaccine sites when they are the ones going in and out of hospitals on a weekly and sometimes daily basis to receive treatment. These individuals are being told by their doctors that they have a significantly higher chance of being hospitalized if they contract COVID-19 yet are not being prioritized to get vaccinated. This is unacceptable.

We recognize the challenges the CDC is facing in recommending priorities for the vaccination, but strongly urge you to reconsider your stance on prioritization for people in active treatment, or in remission of, cancer. We urge you to review the emerging evidence indicating the impact of the COVID-19 on people with cancer and ensure these individuals are not being turned away

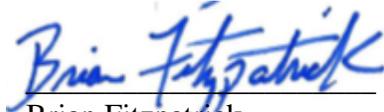
from the initial distributions. Our states need clarity and we stand ready to work with you toward a distribution plan that prioritizes those who are the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Elise M. Stefanik in blue ink.

Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Brian Fitzpatrick in blue ink.

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress