



THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

February 25, 2021

Monica Bharel MD, MPH
Commissioner
Department of Public Health
250 Washington St
Boston, MA 02108

Commissioner Bharel:

As a follow up to my conversation with our Governor Charlie Baker last evening, I thank you for making an important commitment in helping to ensure equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, information and resources to Communities of Color. The Commonwealth's vaccine equity initiative dovetails seamlessly with existing efforts in the City of Springfield, specifically Springfield's Vax Force.

The Springfield Vax Force is a committee convened by myself as Mayor of the City of Springfield and Chaired by my Commissioner of Health and Human Services Helen Caulton-Harris (who by the way has done a tremendous job). It is comprised of a diverse representation of our community leaders in health, faith, education, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The committee's mission is to provide credible COVID-19 resources to the citizens of Springfield using science, data and information to guide decision-making, and to help educate our residents and dispel misinformation.

The strategy for achieving the overarching goal is divided into five tasks:

- COVID-19 vaccine information shared by health professionals with the public, committee and health professionals aimed at underscoring medical and scientific facts
- Research aimed at tracking the public's attitudes and experiences with vaccinations. Using a combination of surveys and focus groups, the committee will track the active nature of public opinion as vaccine distribution unfolds, including vaccine confidence and hesitancy, trusted messengers and messages, as well as the public's experiences with vaccination as distribution begins

- Identify the intersection of COVID-19 vaccine distribution and institutions of higher learning, secondary education and youth organizations in Springfield
- Develop comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine resources for the faith-based community in Springfield
- Develop comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine resources for diverse groups in Springfield including marketing materials, public service announcements, public relations, and online engagement, while simultaneously soliciting feedback from groups to improve communication strategies

The successful execution of these tasks will result in a continued effective and efficient operations strategy that includes best practices on designing a COVID-19 vaccine distribution system that is easily accessible to the public, particularly our Communities of Color.

Please and again, the City of Springfield would like to be identified by the Commonwealth as one of the communities hardest hit by the pandemic. We would like to work directly with the Baker-Polito administration and the Department of Public Health on this initiative to help ease the burden of communities most impacted by the pandemic.

Our operations team is prepared to establish strategically located vaccination sites targeting the faith-based community, Latinx, African-American, Caribbean and Vietnamese populations at the following locations immediately:

- St. Johns Congregational Church
- The Raymond A. Jordan Senior Center
- Gerena Community School
- Rebecca M Johnson Middle School
- South End Community Center

Each location will require a total of 250 initial doses, and 250 second doses, bringing the total number of doses required to 2,500.

The Springfield Vax Force will require funding to assure the hiring of competent staff including certified vaccinators, IT professionals, and administrators.

As a means to support our stated goal, Springfield Vax Force has engaged a Black Woman owned marketing firm based in Springfield to develop organizational strategy, public relations and communications, marketing assets, community partnerships, and media campaigns. The committee will also require funding to support those efforts.

In addition, the Springfield Vax Force has scheduled a virtual town hall to be hosted by myself, HHS Commissioner Caulton-Harris and our Vax Force committee members on March 16, 2021 produced by Focus Springfield – our local Community P.E.G. broadcasting station. The town hall will reinforce the tasks listed above with the help of our health clinicians, research analysts, educators, faith-based leaders, and diversity, equity and inclusion experts. Research has shown

that vaccine acceptance increases after receiving credible vaccine information. Consequently, we are requesting that the first round of vaccine doses be received no later than March 19, 2021.

We look forward to continuing working with you and the Baker-Polito administration on this critical collaborative.

Respectfully,



Domenic J. Sarno
Mayor

"Good health & God Bless"

Cc: Governor Charlie Baker
Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito
Secretary Mary Lou Sudders
Helen Caulton-Harris, Springfield Commissioner of Health and Human Services
Springfield City Council
Springfield State Delegation