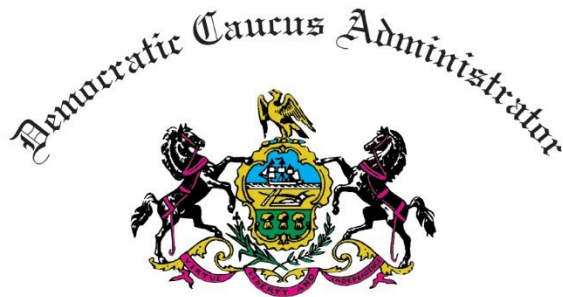


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Senate of Pennsylvania

March 8, 2021

Alison Beam, Acting Secretary of Health
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
8th Fl West, Health and Welfare Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Acting Secretary Beam:

I am writing to express my growing sense of frustration, disappointment, and anger over the manner in which the Commonwealth has handled the distribution and administration of and public information efforts about COVID-19 vaccines. These sentiments echo across the board from both my constituents and local officials who question if they will receive a vaccination, when they will receive it and how it will be distributed.

While I understand that supply availability was a primary road block when the vaccination effort began a couple of months ago, recent news reports out of Washington indicate that the Biden Administration has been successful in dramatically ramping up vaccine distribution across the country to the point that more than 2 million individuals per day are now being inoculated nationwide. Yet here in Pennsylvania in general, and Berks County in particular, vaccine availability lags and residents continually scramble to find the small number of outlets that may have scarce supplies of vaccines available locally. Area residents bristle when they watch or read anecdotal news reports that neighboring counties have been able to conduct mass vaccination events. The recent statistics I have reviewed seem to indicate that thus far Berks County is indeed on the lower end of the vaccination scale. In addition, local officials have expressed their consternation to me that they have been unable to get accurate timely information on vaccine supply and distribution even as they make plans for a mass vaccination site near Reading. In essence, it seems we have unwittingly created a system of haves and have nots in the race to protect our people against COVID.

Yesterday, I listened in on a Department briefing to officials in Southeast Pennsylvania, which at least, provided a more complete picture of vaccine availability, distribution, and administration in that area of the Commonwealth. That briefing provided some context and clarity as to how and when vaccine administration in counties and communities in these areas is being handled and provided a modicum of hope. At minimum, the same type of briefing and information should be provided in the immediate future to officials and the people of Reading and Berks County. The residents and officials in our area deserve no less, as the health and safety of our residents is just as important as other areas of the state. This then is to request that the department immediately take steps to provide similar attention to and opportunities for the people of Reading and Berks County. Thank you and I hope to hear from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Judith L. Schwank
Senator—11th District

JLS/TG
CC All Concerns Stakeholders