



February 19, 2021

Tomás Aragón, MD, Dr. PH
Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health
PO Box 997377
Sacramento, CA 95899

RE: Counties Need Immediate Clarification on Vaccine Distribution for Farmworkers

Dear Dr. Aragón:

We continue to hear from our counties, labor advocates, and agricultural growers of mounting concerns about the inconsistent and insufficient vaccine distribution across our state for farmworkers. Despite classification as essential workers and prioritization in the state's vaccination plan, farmworkers—except in isolated cases¹—are simply not receiving the vaccine. We believe this is because counties are not exercising their discretion to release vaccine supply to this vulnerable population. We therefore request that CDPH immediately provide clarification and guidance to the state's top agricultural counties, which we represent, on vaccine distribution for priority tiers. **Please make clear to these agricultural counties that they can and should be allocating vaccines to farmworkers.**

A recent University of California, San Francisco study revealed that farmworkers are contracting and dying of COVID-19 at alarming, disproportionate rates.² Despite this, we hear that in many counties that have begun vaccinating individuals in Phase 1B, mass vaccination sites and clinics are only open to those age 65 and older. The most commonly cited reasons for excluding farmworkers from vaccination sites are supply limits and lack of clarification from the state on vaccine distribution for priority tiers. To address this inconsistency, we request that you immediately clarify the guidelines on vaccine distribution for priority groups to the county health officers from the following agricultural counties, which we represent and are home to the vast majority of our state's farmworkers: Kern, Tulare, Fresno, Monterey, Stanislaus, Merced, San Joaquin, Ventura, Kings, Imperial, Madera, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Riverside, and Sonoma.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure farmworkers receive the vaccine as soon as possible, so that we can save lives. We would appreciate a response within one week of your receipt of this

¹ See, e.g. [Hundreds of farmworkers get vaccinated for COVID-19 in Fresno County](#) and [Gov. Gavin Newsom visits farmworker vaccination clinic at Coachella packinghouse](#). Because these examples are the exception not the norm, they serve more to frustrate and confuse farmworkers in other regions who are not receiving the vaccine from their counties.

² See University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), [Excess mortality associated with the COVID-19 pandemic among Californians 18–65 years of age, by occupational sector and occupation](#) (Jan. 22, 2021).

letter, confirming that these counties have received clarification and guidance related to this issue. If we are going to designate farmworkers as a prioritized group, it is critical we do all we can to treat them as such and ensure they actually receive the vaccine.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



ROBERT RIVAS
Assemblymember, 30th District



MONIQUE LIMÓN
Senator, 19th District



JOAQUIN ARAMBULA, MD
Assemblymember, 31st District



SUSAN TALAMANTES EGGMAN
Senator, 5th District



EDUARDO GARCIA
Assemblymember, 56th District



ANNA CABALLERO
Senator, 12th District



CARLOS VILLAPUDUA
Assemblymember, 13th District



JOHN LAIRD
Senator, 17th District



RUDY SALAS
Assemblymember, 32nd District



STEVE BENNET
Assemblymember, 37th District



JESSE GABRIEL
Assemblymember, 45th District



MARC LEVINE
Assemblymember, 10th District



MARK STONE
Assemblymember, 29th District

CC: Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor
Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the Assembly
Honorable Toni Atkins, Senate President Pro Tem
Honorable Maria Elena Durazo, Chair, California Latino Legislative Caucus