



March 12, 2021

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: State's New Vaccine Equity Metric Meets the Needs of Most Impacted Communities

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the California Latino Legislative Caucus, we write to commend and thank you for prioritizing equity in the state's distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine—specifically, your announcement last week that the state will begin using the Healthy Places Index (HPI) to allocate 40% of the state's vaccines to our hardest hit communities. This move not only brings much needed vaccines to frontline, low-income communities who have been devastated by this pandemic, but also reconfirms California's commitment to implement an equitable COVID-19 response.

The poorest communities in our state are also communities of color. They are contracting and dying of COVID-19 at much higher rates than other Californians. Latinos in California remain the ethnic group with the highest COVID-19 death rate at 46%, even though they only make up 39% of the population. Despite this, higher income, white Californians are being vaccinated at significantly higher rates compared to low income Californians of color. Following letters from us and respective members of our Caucus, we are grateful that you are tackling this inequity head on. You boldly proclaimed in your State of the State address earlier this week that, "we're not just talking about equity, we are building it into the very fabric of all of our programs," and we are grateful that your recent actions match your words.

We are particularly pleased that you are utilizing the Healthy Places Index to direct vaccines to the communities with the greatest need. Using data related to the economy, education, healthcare access, housing, neighborhoods, clean environment, transportation, and social environment, the HPI is a powerful tool to identify the zip-code level communities with the worst health outcomes in our state. These zip codes are in the lowest quartile of the HPI and capture the most impacted communities throughout the state, including the Central Valley, Central Coast, Inland Empire, Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Northern CA. Thanks to your Administration's action, more janitorial, warehouse, grocery, garment, agricultural, logistics and many other essential workers in these HPI communities will access the vaccine – workers who've faced the brunt of this pandemic and who our state quite simply cannot function without.

We look forward to continue working with you to ensure that our shared value of equity is reflected in all aspects of our state's pandemic response. Thank you for you unwavering support of our highest-need communities.

Sincerely,

MARIA ELENA DURAZO
Chair, CA Latino Legislative Caucus
Senator, 24th District

ROBERT RIVAS
Vice Chair, CA Latino Legislative Caucus
Assemblymember, 30th District

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