



January 8, 2021

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington D.C. 20201

General Gustave F. Perna
Chief Operating Officer
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar and General Perna,

As governors, our administrations are fully committed to delivering the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines to our residents as quickly and safely as possible. This work is of the utmost importance to protect the health and wellbeing of America's working families, so we can return to a strong economy and normal day-to-day activities. We very much appreciate the partnership with Operation Warp Speed (OWS) and are grateful for the vaccines received to date, but our states and residents need more vaccines now. This need is all the more urgent with the onset of the new variant of the virus.

According to publicly reported information, the federal government currently has upwards of 50% of currently produced vaccines held back by the administration for reasons unknown.¹ While some of these life-saving vaccines are sitting in Pfizer freezers, our nation is losing 2,661 Americans each day, according to the latest seven-day average. The failure to distribute these doses to states who request them is unconscionable and unacceptable. We demand that the federal government begin distributing these reserved doses to states immediately.

Reportedly, the holding back of doses has been to prepare to 'mitigate situations' in the manufacturing and distribution of vaccines.² In December, OWS announced agreements with both Pfizer and Moderna to acquire an additional 100 million vaccine doses from each

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/12/24/trump-administration-is-holding-back-over-half-its-vaccine-doses-distribute-them-now/>

² <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/14/covid-vaccine-us-plans-to-ship-6-million-moderna-doses-once-fda-gives-ok.html>

company, bringing the combined allocations expected to the U.S. government to 400 million doses by the second quarter of the year. These agreements, combined with the expected emergency use authorizations of vaccines from Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca later this year, should give you the utmost confidence that the manufacturing pipeline is robust, safe, and capable of protecting a majority of the America public in the coming year.

Our states are ready to work around the clock to ramp up distribution, get more shots in arms, and save more American lives. General Perna, as you have stated before, “a vaccine sitting on a shelf is not effective.” We couldn’t agree with you more. That’s why we are asking for your help now. When we work together, we can end this pandemic and return to a life of normalcy sooner.

Our finest medical researchers have made it crystal clear: if we fail, there will be even more dire consequences for our families, our small businesses, and our economy. This is America. There is no challenge we can’t meet. Let’s work together and get it done.


Sincerely,



Governor Gretchen Whitmer
State of Michigan



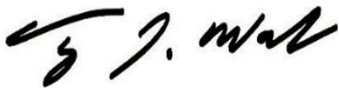
Governor Gavin Newsom
State of California



Governor Laura Kelly
State of Kansas



Governor J.B. Pritzker
State of Illinois



Governor Tim Walz
State of Minnesota



Governor Andrew Cuomo
State of New York



Governor Jay Inslee
State of Washington



Governor Tony Evers
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