

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 17, 2021

Jeff Zients  
White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Jeff Zients,

As the Biden Administration's COVID-19 task force continues to work on efficiently and equitably vaccinating the U.S. population against COVID-19, we write to urge you to work with states, territories, Indian Tribes, and other jurisdictions to facilitate and ensure the swift vaccination of farm and food chain workers. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, farm and food chain workers have worked tirelessly—often putting their own health at risk—to ensure Americans remain fed throughout this difficult time. It is therefore imperative that these essential frontline workers be included in the initial phases of vaccine distribution nationwide.

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, we have seen COVID-19 sicken thousands of frontline farm and food chain workers while hundreds have lost their lives. This includes independent farmers and ranchers, farmworkers, food processing workers, and last-mile food workers in grocery stores and restaurants. These workers are disproportionately from low-income and immigrant communities, shedding light on the exacerbated issue of long-standing racial and ethnic disparities we continue to witness. And while these workers are critical to keeping our food system working, little has been done to keep them safe.

The Biden Administration inherited a patchwork vaccine distribution process, and this coupled with limited doses has created a system rooted in inequity, frustration, and uncertainty. Current recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) call for the vaccination of “non-health care frontline essential workers”—which would include grocery store, meatpacking plant, and food processing and agriculture workers—in Phase 1b. However, as states and other jurisdictions continue to implement their specific distribution plans, we are seeing both the exclusion of farm and food chain workers in some states and last minute changes in others.

As the Biden Administration continues to develop and implement its COVID-19 vaccine distribution strategy, we encourage you to address the specific needs of our farm and food chain workers and support states and other jurisdictions in ensuring the swift vaccination of these workers. We also ask that any plans to distribute the vaccine through employers be done in consultation with the union and worker representatives to make sure that workers have a sense of being protected during this process. This must be done in order to both adequately ensure their health and safety while also guaranteeing the continuity of food production and distribution in the U.S.

We look forward to tackling the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic alongside those in the administration.

Sincerely,

/s/  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

/s/  
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

/s/  
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

/s/  
Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator

/s/  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

/s/  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

/s/  
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

/s/  
Mark Kelly  
United States Senator

/s/  
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

/s/  
Alex Padilla  
United States Senator