



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 cases<sup>1</sup>—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.<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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, 30<sup>th</sup> District



**MONIQUE LIMÓN**  
Senator, 19<sup>th</sup> District



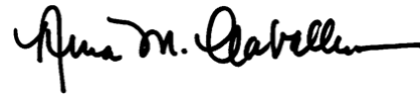
**JOAQUIN ARAMBULA, MD**  
Assemblymember, 31<sup>st</sup> District



**SUSAN TALAMANTES EGGMAN**  
Senator, 5<sup>th</sup> District



**EDUARDO GARCIA**  
Assemblymember, 56<sup>th</sup> District



**ANNA CABALLERO**  
Senator, 12<sup>th</sup> District



**CARLOS VILLAPUDUA**  
Assemblymember, 13<sup>th</sup> District



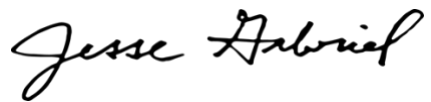
**JOHN LAIRD**  
Senator, 17<sup>th</sup> District



**RUDY SALAS**  
Assemblymember, 32<sup>nd</sup> District



**STEVE BENNET**  
Assemblymember, 37<sup>th</sup> District



**JESSE GABRIEL**  
Assemblymember, 45<sup>th</sup> District



**MARC LEVINE**  
Assemblymember, 10<sup>th</sup> District



**MARK STONE**  
Assemblymember, 29<sup>th</sup> 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