

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 27, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We are honored to represent the diverse residents of the Northern Bronx in New York's 16th Congressional District, and are deeply concerned by the impact that COVID-19 has had on residents in this area. We are writing today to request that you provide additional vaccination resources for New York City to ensure that residents of color, elderly residents, and people with disabilities in my district can access these life-saving vaccines.

One out of every thirteen residents in the Co-op City/Edenwald/Wakefield area had been diagnosed with COVID-19 over the last year, and a staggering 411 people living there have lost their lives to this deadly virus. The daily case rate remains higher than that of New York City at large, and the death rate of 505 people per 100,000 is among the highest in the nation. In these neighborhoods, 90 percent of residents are people of color, and one in four residents are elderly. The impact of COVID-19 here highlights the disproportionate harm that the virus has had on communities of color and the elderly, and emphasizes the importance of swift action in this region to overcome this virus.

Despite the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in this area, few federal resources have been allocated to ensure that the 122,163 people living in Co-op City, Edenwald, and Wakefield can access life-saving vaccinations. Only 4 percent of Wakefield residents and 7 percent of Co-op City/Edenwald residents have received a vaccine, compared to 13 percent statewide. Nationally, nearly two-thirds of vaccine recipients who reported their race have been white, and communities of color in areas like Co-op City, Edenwald and Wakefield are struggling to overcome the systemic barriers to vaccine access. While there are numerous factors contributing to these troubling disparities in vaccine distribution, transportation inequity is an especially prevalent factor in this region. For residents of zip code 10457, it takes approximately two hours to take the two trains and a bus necessary to make it to the vaccination site at Yankee Stadium. While vaccination sites in Brooklyn and Queens provided shuttle bus services, this is not available at the sites in the Northern Bronx. The thousands of residents in this region who have disabilities lack the support needed to access these distant vaccine sites. Given the low incomes and high unemployment rates of residents in this region, many cannot afford to take the 20-minute taxi ride necessary to the Yankee Stadium vaccine site. In addition, 22 percent of residents in this area lack internet access, creating further difficulties as residents try to register for vaccines and research how to access them via public transit. Having access to vaccines in their backyard would allow them to more easily access the necessary information, reminders, and follow-up vaccines.

With this in mind, we respectfully request that your office urgently mobilize the necessary resources and work with the relevant New York City authorities to increase the number of vaccines

available to residents in Co-op City and the surrounding Northern Bronx region. Providing increased resources for vaccines in this area would be a key step toward overcoming the structural barriers to vaccine access as we work to ensure the most vulnerable, marginalized residents of New York State get vaccinated. We look forward to working with you and your team to address this pressing issue.

Sincerely,



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator