



**STATE OF MARYLAND  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**LARRY HOGAN  
GOVERNOR**

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

January 4, 2021

Dear Secretary Azar:

The safe, timely, orderly, and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to Marylanders is our highest priority as we continue to battle the pandemic. I know this is a goal you and your colleagues at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Operation Warp Speed share. I thank you for the incredible achievement of overseeing development and approving multiple vaccines in record time.

In accordance with the guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), Maryland directed our initial allocated doses of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to hospital-based frontline healthcare workers, via direct shipments to hospitals across our state, and to nursing home residents and staff, via participation in HHS' Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program with CVS and Walgreens pharmacies.

According to our records, as of January 3, 2021, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) has allocated 61,425 first doses to the program, all of which have been delivered. However, according to the state's immunization information system, ImmuNet, the program has administered just 7,397 (12%) of these doses since vaccine shipments to the program began on December 21, 2020.

We are deeply concerned by the pace of progress of this program and by potential data reporting lag-time discrepancies. If the data entered by the pharmacies into ImmuNet is accurate, that means that over 54,000 doses are sitting unused at this time. Our records indicate that some CVS/Walgreens locations have administered none of the vaccine doses they have received. This is unacceptable.

If the pharmacies are administering more vaccines than they are reporting, that - while a vastly preferable scenario - still presents serious operational, transparency and communications problems at a critical time where we need to be instilling public confidence in the vaccine and the vaccination process.

We understand both the Pfizer and Moderna products are new and complex vaccines posing unique challenges for handling and administration. However, given that this program was announced three months ago, in October, it is our expectation that adequate planning for logistics, vaccinator personnel and data entry personnel and processes should have been developed well ahead of the first doses arriving at the pharmacies.

In the announcement of the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program, HHS pledged, “To ensure success of this program, HHS and OWS will continue coordination with jurisdictions [and] long-term care facilities...” I ask that you direct your team to work with us to get this program back on track so that we can protect our most vulnerable Marylanders.

Sincerely,



Larry Hogan  
Governor