



Chesterfield County, Virginia

Board of Supervisors

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January 26, 2021

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

We are writing to implore you and the Virginia Department of Health to consider further how localities such as Chesterfield County may assist in the state's vaccination rollout.

Following an unequalled scientific quest to develop a vaccine, the hope such an endeavor instilled in Americans and Virginians has been replaced with confusion, anxiety and fear. We remain deeply empathetic, yet we have been rendered helpless.

The front lines of local government are where citizens reach first, and it's where they are heard. This time, their cries to us are unprecedented to anything we've experienced.

Simply put, Virginia's campaign to vaccinate the masses is totally defective. On this issue, we have run out of patience and tolerance. Our citizens deserve better. They also deserve accountability as to what personnel or systems are responsible for the inordinate challenges that arise, almost daily. For example, Friday we learned the state's online eligibility tool allowed no way for citizens to register for a vaccine and that the local health district would have to develop such a tool. We learned this just as we were positioning our libraries to help serve those in need of a computer and assistance to register.

Virginia has far too many doses still not administered, and that's not the fault of the federal government. If Virginia is not getting its fair share of the national allotment, we must know what is being done to inform Virginia citizens about where we stand as a commonwealth and where lies the accountability that should accompany such simple metrics.

So, we ask you, why are Virginians waiting longer than citizens in other states? Why does it appear that citizens in Chesterfield are having to wait longer than those in other communities? Why would the commonwealth add anyone to an eligibility list knowing there are not enough doses to go around? If the answers to these questions are backed by facts to share with our citizens, then why haven't they been provided? Again, accountability appears to be lacking.

The state's only delegated power to us is vaccinating public employees, including teachers. Yet we receive a fraction of the doses we order to achieve this goal, despite the resources we have in nurses, paramedics and other county employees to safeguard our 1a and 1b employees with the vaccine and within the guidelines the state set. A recent order of 8,000 doses resulted in only 1,000 delivered, and now we're being told to only expect 1,500 doses per week over the next four weeks. Unless the state can double the supply chain, we foresee four weeks from now only being able to use our limited allotment to meet the second dose needs of people for the subsequent four-week period. If that is true, would that mean no additional first doses for a four-week period? Again, we need answers.

At this rate, we are six-plus months from achieving the goal of vaccinating the employees deemed essential for the continuity of government and schools. More importantly, we are saddened and angered that our general public appears to be enduring an even slower process with resulting deaths occurring to the most vulnerable – 90 percent of deaths are occurring among those over age 60, 50 percent over age 80. Yet these populations, appear to be hindered the most in getting vaccinated. What is the accountability standard to quickly reach these populations, before they risk death or the continued isolation that they endure more than any other population subset?

We are also running into situations that will not make sense to our citizens if you can't get them vaccinated. One example is we may be vaccinating inmates per your guidance and prior to our citizens having the opportunity. In case you're not aware, our jail facility has not had a COVID-19 positive case since June of last year and not one death, yet our citizens have endured over 17,000 positive cases and 190 deaths. They must endure endless prayers for the safety of family and close friends, staying isolated away from work, weekly faith services, and even their own families. They've seen loved ones suffer greatly. They do not need to see an inmate in our well-safeguarded facility get in line in front of them.

We know Chesterfield, alone, doesn't have the resources to vaccinate all citizens in the county, but we also know that a combined effort incorporating our partners, including the hard-working staff of the Chesterfield Health District, Medical Reserve Corp volunteers, and other organizations and businesses, could get this done. We want to help by identifying sites for mass vaccinations, providing logistical support, and identifying distribution networks among health care providers, pharmacies and urgent care centers. And, we've already begun doing some of this work.

What's happening now is neither equitable nor fair to citizens or public employees, including teachers, who look to their local leaders to lead. We need action from you, as do the people who have entrusted us to do what's best for the community. People need answers and accountability when systems fail, call center numbers have wait times exceeding two hours, appointments are canceled, and a litany of other cries that can't be explained away with nice words, but rather action with deliberate speed and in an equitable and fair manner.

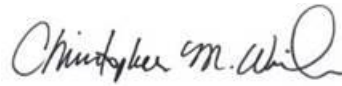
We welcome further dialogue and action to untie our hands for the sake of the citizens whom we are all here to serve.

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
January 26, 2021
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Sincerely,



James A. Holland, Chair
Dale District Supervisor



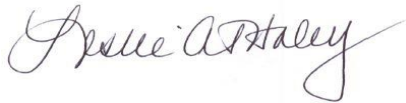
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Leslie A. T. Haley
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Cc: The Honorable Members, Chesterfield Legislative Delegation