

1. Public Notice 2/4/2021

Documents:

[2-4-21 PUBLIC NOTICE.PDF](#)

2. COVID-19 VACCINATION PROCESS

Documents:

[COVID-19 VACCINATION PROCESS, 2-4-21.PDF](#)



PUBLIC NOTICE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT

THE NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

WILL HOLD A HEARING

ON

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2021 AT 10:00 A.M.

REGARDING THE COVID-19 VACCINE PROCESS

IN

**THE PETER J. SCHMITT MEMORIAL LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER
THEODORE ROOSEVELT EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BUILDING
1550 FRANKLIN AVENUE, MINEOLA, NEW YORK 11501**

Please be advised that due to health and safety concerns associated with the COVID-19 virus and in accordance with New York State Executive Order No. 202.1, which, in part, suspends Article 7 of the Public Officers Law to the extent necessary to permit any public body to meet and take such actions authorized by law without permitting in public in-person access to meetings, this hearing will be closed to the public and will be available for viewing online at <http://www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/Legis/index.html>

Public comment on any item may be emailed to the Clerk of the Legislature at LegPublicComment@nassaucountyny.gov and will be made part of the formal record of this Legislative meeting.

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MICHAEL C. PULITZER
Clerk of the Legislature
Nassau County, New York

DATED: January 29, 2021
Mineola, NY

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NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

FULL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
COVID-19 VACCINATION PROCESS

RICHARD NICOLELLO,
Presiding Officer

1550 Franklin Avenue
Mineola, New York

Thursday, February 4, 2021
10:05 A.M.

1

2 A P P E A R A N C E S:3 RICHARD NICOLELLO,
4 Presiding Officer5 HOWARD KOPEL,
6 Alternate Deputy Presiding Officer7 DENISE FORD,
8 Alt. Deputy Presiding Officer

9 STEVEN RHOADS

10 DEBRA MULE

11 C. WILLIAM GAYLOR III

12 VINCENT MUSCARELLA

13 ELLEN BIRNBAUM

14 LAURA SCHAEFER

15 THOMAS MCKEVITT

16 KEVAN ABRAHAMS,
17 Minority Leader

18 ROSE MARIE WALKER

19 JOHN FERRETTI, JR.

20 JOSHUA LAFAZAN

21 ARNOLD DRUCKER

22 JAMES KENNEDY

23 DELIA DERIGGI-WHITTON

24 CARRIE SOLAGES

25 SIELA BYNOE

MICHAEL PULITZER,
Clerk of the Legislature

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LIST OF SPEAKERS

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KYLE-ROSE LOUDER,
 Deputy County Executive for
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GERARD GIULIANO, Attorney,
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1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: I'd invite
3 the legislators to the chambers. Let's get
4 started. I'm calling this hearing of the
5 Legislature to order and ask Legislator Tom
6 McKevitt to lead us in the Pledge of
7 Allegiance.

8 (The Pledge of Allegiance was
9 recited.)

10 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Thank you,
11 Tom, and thank you to all the legislators
12 who are here and participating remotely.

13 I will say a few words at the
14 beginning and hope to jump right into the
15 program.

16 We have Dr. Eisenstein, our
17 commissioner of health, available remotely
18 for approximately an hour. We also have
19 Kyle Rose-Louder, the Deputy County
20 Executive; as well as Gerard Giuliano
21 counsel to the Department of Health to speak
22 with us today.

23 We also have a tremendous number
24 of comments that we have received via email
25 and it's unfortunate that we could not have

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 the public here participating directly, but
3 obviously with COVID it's too much of a
4 concern at the current time and hopefully
5 many of our residents are watching this on
6 the stream on the Nassau County website.

7 Although the plan for years has
8 been for the local departments of health to
9 administer vaccines in situations such as
10 the one we are in now, the state of
11 New York, when the vaccine rollout began,
12 decided it would control this process
13 completely. It has done so using local
14 hospitals as an exercise of that control
15 providing Nassau County and other counties
16 throughout the state with a very limited
17 role to play.

18 I personally want to thank
19 Dr. Eisenstein and the Department of Health
20 for what they have done to date.
21 Dr. Eisenstein's leadership and the
22 information he's provided us and we provided
23 to the residents has been exemplary and we
24 really appreciate all that you've done and
25 all that your staff has done.

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 The vaccine began distribution in
3 December, mid December, and, to date, only a
4 small fraction of our population has been
5 vaccinated. Unfortunately most of us
6 expected more.

7 I think we can safely say now
8 that it looks like it will be a number of
9 months before we have sufficient vaccines in
10 arms to get anywhere near a herd immunity.

11 What I'm saying is not a
12 criticism of our Department of Health. I
13 believe our Department of Health has done an
14 excellent job with the limited role that
15 they've had and limitations that have been
16 imposed upon them by New York State.

17 But the rollout otherwise could
18 not have been much worse. The state had
19 increased eligibility including, in one
20 week, going from 75 years olds to 65 year
21 olds, to the point where millions of
22 New Yorkers are eligible for the vaccine.
23 Hundreds of thousands of Nassau County
24 residents are eligible and, as we all know,
25 there is a very limited supply.

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 The obvious result is that the
3 system has been overwhelmed. The most
4 concerning part of that is that we are not
5 getting enough vaccines to the most
6 vulnerable part of our population.

7 All of us as legislators have
8 heard from our residents through email,
9 telephone calls. We've had an incredible
10 number of public comments that have been
11 submitted for this hearing.

12 Far and away the biggest issue
13 the biggest complaint is the vulnerable
14 people in our population, especially the
15 elderly, 80, 90 year olds, not being able to
16 get the vaccine.

17 We've heard from those elderly
18 people, from their children who are
19 concerned about their parents. We heard
20 from many people with underlying conditions,
21 disabilities, et cetera.

22 They've had difficulty with the
23 state's website. They've been unable to get
24 through. When they have, they've gotten
25 appointments several months out. Telephone

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 numbers have not worked adequately.

3 Here in Nassau County we had
4 begun vaccinations with a limited supply
5 provided by the state and we are providing
6 that to the general population of eligible
7 residents. We were directing our seniors as
8 to how to contact the county as to how to
9 obtain those vaccines and the state a week
10 or so ago decided that the county itself
11 directly could no longer provide to the
12 general population, but had to provide to
13 first responders and transit workers leaving
14 many seniors unsure of where to go and how
15 to get their vaccines.

16 In today's paper, the governor
17 again notes that Long Island has the highest
18 positivity rate in the state, the Long
19 Island region. In his words Long Island,
20 Long Island, Long Island.

21 Yet, we learn that New York City
22 is restricting appointments to its
23 residents and those who work in the city.

24 Today we read that the state has
25 opened a mass vaccination site at Yankee

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 Stadium providing 15,000 doses in a week,
3 which is almost as much as they have given
4 to Nassau County to date.

5 We need our leaders to advocate
6 more strongly on behalf of this county. In
7 particular, we must call upon the governor
8 to open a mass vaccination site at Nassau
9 Coliseum similar to Yankee Stadium.

10 Again, the county's positivity
11 rate is the highest in the state. We are
12 also calling again for New York City to open
13 their vaccination site to all residents such
14 as the county itself is doing and the state
15 is doing.

16 Most of all, let's change the
17 focus of what this vaccination rollout is
18 and go back to what we should be doing, just
19 protecting the most vulnerable.

20 We've known for over a year and
21 Dr. Eisenstein has said this countless times
22 that those who are most vulnerable, the
23 seniors, especially those with underlying
24 conditions, general population with
25 underlying conditions, are most at risk for

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 serious ailments or possible death. Those
3 are the people that should be protected
4 first. Other states have done this. We
5 have to do more to accomplish that.

6 Again, we have many, many public
7 comments. I'm not going to read them. They
8 are all going to be included in the record.
9 We have the points that have been raised and
10 we will attempt to raise every one of those
11 points during the course of this hearing.

12 I just wanted to briefly mention
13 the individuals and I will give this list to
14 the stenographer, the individuals who sent
15 public comments.

16 Amy Solomito, Richard Sigelman,
17 Kathleen Lynch, Jim Caulfield, Joan (no name
18 provided in the comment), Virginia McNamara,
19 Barbara Thompson, Lorraine Stanton, Ray
20 Muntz, Diana Loeffel, Lizz Mancini, Phyllis
21 Firedenthal, Steven Brslin, Chari Biton,
22 Kathleen Lynch, Selma Miller, Kathy Basile,
23 Slaski, Dorothy Young, Linda DaRocha, Ida
24 Iacovino, Nina Gavan, who is the president
25 of the CSEA of the Nassau University Medical

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 Center, Dr. Sharon Llerena, Tony Tommasulo,
3 Mark Blinderman, Nicole Posin-Oneill, and a
4 number of others who did not leave their
5 names but we have their email addresses.

6 Again, we saw every one of those
7 comments. We read them. We will be raising
8 the points that you've raised during the
9 course of this hearing. Your comment will
10 also be included as part of the record.

11 I want to thank you all again for
12 giving me the opportunity to make those
13 remarks and I ask Dr. Eisenstein if he wants
14 to start things off with a statement or go
15 right to questions.

16 DR. EISENSTEIN: Just a very
17 brief statement. The Legislature has been
18 great in our weekly meetings and I thank you
19 for the opportunity to testify and answer
20 any questions.

21 I'm very proud of the work that
22 the Nassau County Department of Health staff
23 has done. We are up to the vaccination
24 stage of the response to COVID, which is
25 something that we dreamed about for the

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 first ten months. But it's been around the
3 clock for all of us.

4 I'm very grateful to County
5 Executive Curran for giving me the support I
6 needed all the time even including last week
7 when we felt there wasn't enough vaccines
8 for seniors coming to the county. There is
9 still not enough but with her help we
10 advocated and got a supplemental 600 dose
11 allotment last week that we were able to
12 give to seniors.

13 We didn't get that this week
14 because pharmacies opened to start
15 vaccinating seniors. But I'm very
16 appreciative of the support that I have
17 gotten.

18 The health department, I want
19 this to be clear on the record, of more than
20 100 percent of the vaccines that we have
21 been allotted have gone into arms. We are
22 able to go over 100 percent because we have
23 in most cases, we've been given Moderna
24 vaccines since our first day on January 5th.
25 The governor had given us seven days to use

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 each allotment and we've cleared it out way
3 before that.

4 We've gone over 100 percent of
5 our allotment because the Moderna comes in
6 vials of ten doses but they actually package
7 it with 11.

8 In most cases, with the proper
9 sized needles, and we shifted to smaller
10 needles which work just as well for
11 injections safely and effectively but we
12 have been able to get the 11th dose which
13 was not accounted for in our allotment. So
14 we've actually done above 100 percent.

15 Yesterday we were a little bit
16 delayed because of the snow. That's one of
17 the reasons we're heavily booked these days,
18 even over capacity, but I will be there to
19 help shortly and we are going to get it
20 done.

21 Yesterday we started second doses
22 for people that received their first doses
23 with us.

24 IT has been very helpful. I want
25 to thank IT for helping us put a second dose

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2 platform in such that everybody that gets a
3 first dose gets an email within a day or so
4 giving them the appointment and 87 percent
5 of the people who have gotten the first dose
6 have made an appointment quickly. We then
7 reach out to everybody who doesn't respond
8 to make sure we have the correct email and
9 get them second doses.

10 As of yesterday, we passed the
11 15,000 total doses given just by the health
12 department at our two sites plus the one
13 site we did at a church in Hempstead on Dr.
14 Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

15 Of those 15,259 doses, 14,716
16 were first doses and now we're up to where
17 we're going to be first doses and second
18 doses basically every single day straight
19 through. It's a lot of work but it's very
20 rewarding and this is why a health
21 department exists and I'm very appreciative
22 of my staff who is there seven days a week,
23 very long days, and I'm appreciative of all
24 the support I've been given. I jut want to
25 put that on the record before I begin.

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2 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO:

3 Dr. Eisenstein, as I mentioned before, a
4 couple of weeks ago, the state changed who
5 was eligible to receive the vaccine at the
6 Nassau County sites.

7 How are we directing our seniors
8 in terms of where we must go and what the
9 eligible seniors where they must go to
10 obtain their vaccines; is it to the
11 pharmacies and what is the procedure they
12 should be following at this point?

13 DR. EISENSTEIN: So in the very
14 beginning, in the first few weeks, seniors
15 were not on the eligible list. Then when
16 they became eligible it was 75 and over
17 followed the next day by 65 and over, and at
18 that point they were on the list of people
19 we were able to vaccinate.

20 So, during the first couple of
21 weeks that seniors were eligible, we did a
22 comprehensive amount of -- a very large
23 percentage of the vaccines that we were
24 allotted those weeks, probably in the realm
25 of 75 or 80 percent, with the help of

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2 Commissioner Carolyn McCummings,
3 Commissioner of Human Services, under the
4 leadership of Deputy County Executive
5 Rose-Louder, the Office of the Aging worked
6 to set up a process where people were able
7 to get on a list and get instruction and
8 guiding them is still something that we are
9 trying to do.

10 What I was doing is asking for a
11 set number of people from the list of
12 seniors that we tried to reach.

13 We worked very hard to reach
14 seniors in underserved communities using
15 community leaders who were in touch with
16 people that might not have computers or
17 might have difficulty accessing the
18 internet.

19 So, for what the process is now
20 with -- so I would say, you know, send us X
21 number of seniors each day with a list, and
22 now we are continuing on as of about two
23 weeks ago, seniors were assigned, the
24 governor outlined who can vaccinate who.
25 The local health department is not longer

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 eligible to vaccinate seniors. We have been
3 given a list of prioritized essential
4 workers.

5 It's not all essential workers,
6 it's those on the priority list, which
7 includes police and fire, transit workers,
8 airline workers, teachers. Just in the last
9 day or two the governor said he would be
10 adding restaurant workers.

11 So that's what we've been
12 assigned. Seniors since then have been
13 assigned to be vaccinated at pharmacies
14 which started getting vaccine. A bunch of
15 Walgreens in the county started getting
16 vaccine this week as well as at the mass
17 testing sites that the state has stood up.
18 There's one at Jones Beach and Stony Brook
19 on Long Island.

20 But I'm happy to turn it over
21 Deputy County Executive Rose-Louder to
22 discuss the Office of the Aging and how we
23 are organizing support for seniors

24 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: Good morning,
25 everyone. What we're doing in the

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2 Department of Human Services is we obviously
3 noticed at the beginning of our vaccination
4 program that the calls to our Department of
5 Health calling center just shot up. It went
6 from hundreds of calls a day to thousands.

7 And obviously with the staff that
8 we had at the calling center, we did not
9 have sufficient staff to handle all those
10 additional calls.

11 So what we first did was pull
12 staff from other departments, mainly the
13 Department of Social Services, and chose
14 those staff that are used to speaking to
15 people and helping and know how to assist
16 our seniors best and those from the office
17 of aging as well.

18 We started to get them trained so
19 they could take on some of those calls and
20 start assisting our seniors.

21 What we did -- because this
22 population obviously had difficulty
23 navigating the website and the website was
24 crashing, and it presented a lot of problems
25 for our seniors, our concept was to take

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2 their names and numbers so we could
3 preregister them and put them on a list and
4 provide that list to the Department of
5 Health for the pods.

6 So that's what we started to do
7 and not only were we getting calls through
8 the calling center, the office of aging was
9 getting calls, many government elected
10 officials were giving us information from
11 their constituents that they were having
12 difficulty in giving us names.

13 So we were receiving -- and
14 community as well just calling in for their
15 friends and family, churches, calling us
16 about how can they get their seniors
17 vaccinated.

18 So we started compiling lists
19 from all of these different areas.

20 When the County Executive was
21 successful in getting state to allow us to
22 vaccinate an additional 600 last week, we
23 pulled from those lists.

24 We had thousands of seniors on
25 the list, so obviously many were going to be

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2 left out. We tried to do it as fair as
3 possible by pulling from various lists and
4 looking at those most vulnerable, our older
5 seniors, and tried to get them into our
6 system.

7 That's what we were doing and
8 we're still helping the calling center
9 because our calls, while they have
10 diminished some, since the seniors can no
11 longer be vaccinated by us, we still have a
12 tremendous amount of calls that have
13 skyrocketed almost from the beginning of the
14 pandemic, but obviously during the summer
15 there has been a lull and it has picked up
16 again.

17 So, we have our office -- I'm
18 sorry, Department of human services,
19 Department of Social Services both assisting
20 with the Department of Health to alleviate
21 some of that backlog to at least get people
22 on the phone and direct them.

23 Unfortunately we don't have a lot
24 of direction to give them because we know
25 that the pharmacies, there are very few

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2 pharmacies here in Nassau County that are
3 part of the program and hopefully more will
4 be coming online soon as more vaccine
5 becomes available.

6 We do tell them that will be an
7 option for them as well as the state system
8 and that's the most information we can give
9 them at this point.

10 Obviously if the state relaxes
11 the responsibility and allows Nassau County
12 to resume vaccinating seniors, we will do
13 that and we will continue to do that by
14 preregistering them so they don't have to
15 worry about getting access to computers and
16 that we can get them to our pods and get
17 them vaccinated.

18 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: So then
19 seniors are directed now to go to one of two
20 places. It's the pharmacies and the state
21 site?

22 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: That's correct.

23 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: With respect
24 to the pharmacies, are they to -- how do
25 they know that a local pharmacy is

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2 participating? Are they supposed to go and
3 get themselves on a list before the doses
4 are even available? What's the process?
5 What are we telling people to do?

6 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: The only
7 information we had, we got information that
8 there were four pharmacies, Walgreens
9 locally that had been been allotted from the
10 state vaccine, and that those were the
11 participating, and that was last weekend.

12 So that is all the information
13 that we received from the state with respect
14 to the pharmacies.

15 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: In terms of,
16 obviously the state, in order to be eligible
17 they would have to attempt to navigate the
18 state website and things of that nature, but
19 with respect again to the pharmacies, is
20 there any specific direction that we are
21 giving? Are we in Nassau County telling
22 them to call our number? Are we telling
23 them to check with the pharmacies, a
24 combination thereof?

25 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: If they call

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2 our number, we are just giving them that
3 information that they need to call our local
4 Walgreens, or these four Walgreens, and that
5 they have access to the state system.
6 That's all the information that the state
7 has given us.

8 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Is it just
9 the Walgreens or are other pharmacies
10 participating?

11 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: We were given
12 information last weekend about these
13 specific Walgreens but there may be other
14 pharmacies that are signing on to the
15 program, but right now that's all the
16 information that we have.

17 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: The
18 preregistering that the county is doing, can
19 you explain to me what is the benefit of
20 that?

21 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: Well, we
22 recognize that many of our seniors don't
23 have computer skills. Some of the site was
24 problematic and everyone seemed to be having
25 some difficulty there.

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2 So if you have a senior that is
3 not computer savvy and can't navigate the
4 website or even have access to a computer or
5 smartphone to be able to do that, that
6 represented a large number of our seniors.

7 So what we did or what we were
8 going to do, set out to do, was to just get
9 them on the phone and talk to them. We do
10 the registration on our end on their behalf.

11 What we were doing, actually, we
12 were just taking their information, taking
13 their name and information, and when we get
14 them to the site, we register them through
15 our system that way. So that they would not
16 have to worry about sitting down at a
17 computer screen and trying to figure out how
18 to go get that done. We would take that on.

19 That was very short lived
20 because, as you stated, the state virtually
21 prohibited us from continuing in that
22 program so we had to stop.

23 So the last 600 we did, we did by
24 having our seniors actually get registered.
25 We did a pre-registration for ourselves, but

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2 once they got to the site, that is when they
3 were registered and were able to get
4 vaccinated.

5 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Honestly you
6 are trying to do your best to answer the
7 question, and the limitations are not
8 necessarily the results of the efforts
9 you're making and the Department of Health
10 is making, but it's clear to me that the
11 issue here is with the state. There has to
12 be a better system to getting these people
13 the information they need how to navigate
14 the system to make an appointment of where
15 to do.

16 It just seems like the directions
17 are in flux and these are for individuals
18 who need very specific directions.

19 So I think, again, I think we
20 need to refocus our attention on the state
21 and advocate that the state do something
22 better for our vulnerable population.

23 I know that they're making
24 efforts to many of our vulnerable population
25 and we support that.

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2 Certainly the communities that
3 are affected to a greater degree should
4 receive more resources which is good.

5 But in this specific area I think
6 that -- I don't think what we are doing is
7 enough. I don't know what we could do more
8 at the county level, but New York State has
9 got to change. They got to make it easier
10 to open up these vaccines and for people to
11 register.

12 So, we here in the Legislature
13 are going to make sure we make our voices
14 heard to get that done.

15 I'm going to turn it over to the
16 other legislators but there's a question for
17 you or the doctor.

18 In terms of the new groups that
19 the state is allowing counties to determine
20 whether they will allow I think its taxi
21 drivers, restaurant workers, and
22 developmentally disabled, what's the
23 county's plan for that? Is the county going
24 to expand eligibility or not?

25 DR. EISENSTEIN: So I'm in the

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 process of discussing with County Executive
3 Curran and Chief Deputy County Executive
4 Williams and Deputy County Executive
5 Santeramo, Deputy County Executive
6 Rose-Louder.

7 We think that -- we're going to
8 come out with a formal policy on how to do
9 it, but we understand that's all of the
10 essential workers are important and we need
11 to find a way to mitigate risk throughout
12 all of our sectors.

13 It certainly helps if
14 restaurants, we want to see restaurants
15 open. It helps if restaurant staff is
16 vaccinated that it can happen more safely we
17 think.

18 So we have tried to be fair with
19 what we vaccinated. Last week we'd been
20 doing a certain percentage of our vaccine
21 each week for police and fire.

22 We made sure we got a bunch of
23 grocery store workers who are essential
24 workers vaccinated. We've gotten transit
25 workers and NICE bus teachers vaccinated.

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2 This week we're getting teachers vaccinated
3 so I think we're going to come up with a
4 fair means of making sure that all of the
5 essential workers who are eligible are
6 represented.

7 Unfortunately still our allotment
8 this week was still the same 2,800 doses
9 which was the same that we had last week.

10 2,800 doses and we are getting
11 2,800 doses into arms easily. That's not a
12 number we can't handle. We certainly could
13 ramp it up if we had to and would like to
14 but there are tens of thousands, maybe
15 hundreds of thousands of eligible workers,
16 eligible essential employees.

17 So we're going to try a find a
18 way as quickly as possible to get all
19 represented groups vaccinated and come up
20 with a plan to make on how to make sure, the
21 way we've gotten at least a certain
22 percentage of transit workers and police and
23 fire and that's across the county, not only
24 county police, but local village police and
25 volunteer fire departments and mass transit,

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2 NICE bus, grocery store workers.

3 We have hit a certain percentage
4 of all of them and we're going to try to
5 incorporate everybody that we are
6 responsible for vaccinating with the hope
7 that more and more vaccine comes so it can
8 be speed up and that they can also be
9 vaccinated in other segments besides just
10 our pods.

11 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Are you
12 hearing, Dr. Eisenstein, from your
13 conversations with state officials whether
14 it's expected that the number of vaccines
15 are going to increase? What are we looking
16 at in the next few weeks?

17 DR. EISENSTEIN: So, last week,
18 your allotment as a local health department
19 this week is going to remain the same.

20 Then they added a 16 percent
21 increase for three weeks. So our number was
22 2,800. We were told to expect that for
23 three weeks with a 16 percent increase.

24 That 16 percent came to us in the
25 form of 500 doses specifically assigned for

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 us to use on OPWDD state facilities, office
3 of people with developmental disabilities,
4 to make sure we were reaching that
5 vulnerable resident and staff population.

6 Through the Office of Mental
7 Health, Commissioner McCummings, and Deputy
8 County Executive Rose-Louder were working
9 with OPWDD providers with that 500 dose
10 supplement which is added on to the 2,800.

11 We were told to expect the same
12 numbers for three weeks but then a couple of
13 days after that the governor said that 16
14 percent may go up to 20 percent.

15 So I think numbers are starting
16 to trickle up, but for the next couple of
17 weeks, I don't anticipate a large increase
18 to us. The other thing to consider is when
19 more vaccine becomes available, it may not
20 be allotted directly to us.

21 More pharmacies may get it to
22 come online as Deputy County Executive Rose
23 Louder said, there are four specific
24 Walgreens that already have vaccines this
25 week.

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 I assume -- I don't know this as
3 a fact, I assume there are going to be
4 others and other chains as well.

5 We know that CVS is part of the
6 federal program to vaccinate. So I would
7 assume as more vaccine becomes available, I
8 hope some of it comes to us but I assume
9 more pharmacies are going to come online.

10 I know the federally qualified
11 health centers are awaiting vaccine. I know
12 that private doctor offices are eagerly
13 awaiting.

14 So as more comes to us, I don't
15 know how much is going to come to the health
16 department, per se, but I was told to
17 prepare for three weeks of a similar amount
18 to what we have now and that's since been
19 increased to 16 percent and then 20 percent
20 additional, but that is already designated
21 for specific populations and we are working
22 at vaccinating them.

23 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Okay. The
24 other question I had from one of the
25 residents who submitted a comment is, if

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 someone receives a first shot and then
3 becomes sick, what is the protocol?
4 Apparently the information they were
5 provided after the first dose was received
6 did not specify.

7 So, if you become sick after
8 receiving the first dose, what does that
9 person do?

10 DR. EISENSTEIN: Absolutely. I
11 think that's a really important question
12 because, especially, we've been given the
13 Moderna vaccine. It's 28 days between the
14 first and second shot. So people do still
15 get sick.

16 It does take approximately ten
17 days to two weeks for initial immunity,
18 which is not complete immunity and not fully
19 protective and the literature is full of
20 people who got the first dose and became
21 sick within a couple of days or a week or
22 two. Some of them were exposed before they
23 were vaccinated. Some of them might have
24 been exposed immediately after. I want to
25 be clear, it is not related to getting the

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 vaccine. The vaccine cannot get you sick.
3 It is not alive. It does not cause a living
4 virus.

5 It's just temporally related. We
6 have a lot of disease in the community and a
7 lot of people being vaccinated.

8 If you get sick between the first
9 and second dose, the CDC offers that you
10 wait 90 days because we know that there will
11 be 90 days immunity, but you can get the
12 second dose 10 days after the start of your
13 symptoms or later if you have resolved.

14 So we certainly will work with
15 people to reschedule if they choose, and
16 depending on when the timing is, they may
17 not qualify for a second dose on the 28th
18 day. They may have to wait until the 40th
19 or 50th day.

20 On individual cases, we set up a
21 means of responding to people with unique
22 circumstances. I want to thank you Gerry
23 Giuliano who is in the chamber with you who
24 is overseeing that effort for individuals
25 who have extreme circumstances or they got

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 called in, a police officer gets called in
3 to work on the 28th day and can't get a
4 vaccine.

5 So there are numerous
6 circumstances where some people will have to
7 be reschedule and if they contract disease
8 between the first and second dose, it will
9 require a medical evaluation as far as
10 whether they should get it on the 28th day
11 or they should wait.

12 We know that after people are
13 infected they are immune for 90 days, so the
14 CDC says you can wait for 90 days. That's
15 true for the first shot too. We have had
16 people come in for a vaccine and they were
17 just infected in the last four or six weeks.

18 If it's more than ten days out,
19 it's not contraindicated to give them the
20 shot but they also are presumed immune for
21 90 days so we would want them to get the
22 shot which is most effective for them as
23 well as, if they are already immune, we
24 would like to see the shot go to people who
25 are not immune, but it's not a

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 contraindication, as long as they are ten
3 days out and recovered from symptoms.

4 So the same is true for first and
5 second shot, whether people get COVID before
6 the first shot or between the first and
7 second shot, but each of our pods we have a
8 medical consultant and certainly they can
9 call their provider ahead of time for
10 guidance.

11 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Legislator
12 Ferretti had a question. Anyone else?

13 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: Hello,
14 Dr. Eisenstein. Gerry, Ms. Rose-Louder.

15 I want to echo what the Presiding
16 Officer said about the Department of Health
17 and what a fantastic job you have all done.

18 Dr. Eisenstein, I know you have
19 all been available to us 24/7 and your
20 response has really been outstanding as
21 always. So thank you for that.

22 DR. EISENSTEIN: Thank you.

23 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: Just some
24 numbers I want to confirm. I have some
25 numbers here that indicate that

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 approximately 288,000 doses have been
3 received in the Long Island region. Is that
4 roughly accurate?

5 DR. EISENSTEIN: So, the total
6 vaccination process for the Long Island
7 region, Long Island has been designated as
8 one the state's hub regions. The hub is
9 being coordinated by Northwell Health. I
10 don't know what the total that has been
11 distributed in Long Island is. Northwell
12 coordinates that.

13 I know what's allotted to me and
14 certainly I'm on the hub calls with
15 Northwell.

16 I'm not sure exactly how much has
17 come to Long Island as a whole.

18 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: So I'm
19 giving you numbers given to us from the
20 state. What we are showing is 288,000
21 doses, approximately 2.7 million people are
22 in the Long Island region, that's the
23 population.

24 Now, in New York City, there is
25 approximately 1,041,000 doses, again,

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 according to the state information and they
3 have a population of approximately 8.4
4 million.

5 Now the vaccine to resident ratio
6 in Long Island is 10.6 percent and the
7 vaccine to resident ratio in New York City
8 12.4 percent.

9 This is a number that's somewhat
10 troubling to me in light of the fact that
11 the Long Island region right now has the
12 highest infection rate.

13 So my question is, maybe this is
14 a question for Ms. Rose-Louder, what, if
15 anything, is the administration specifically
16 County Executive doing to advocate for more
17 equity here in the state distribution of the
18 vaccine?

19 DR. EISENSTEIN: So I would say
20 that I am on hub calls with Northwell, and
21 when we have seen a gap like I described
22 last week when I felt there was no vaccine
23 coming to seniors, County Executive Curran
24 got right on the phone with me speaking with
25 executive chamber in Albany excellently got

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2 us 600 extra doses for seniors last week.

3 I understand 600 doses is not sufficient,
4 anywhere remotely sufficient but it was 600
5 more than we had been allotted.

6 I have been on the hub calls with
7 Northwell who is the coordinating body. We
8 have also been on calls with the New York
9 State association of counties, and
10 advocating for our fair share and I think --
11 and I'm on the call with the state health
12 department almost every single day bringing
13 up the numbers and bringing up or our
14 population and with the understanding being
15 a neighbor to New York City, and there is
16 always -- that always presents public health
17 interesting scenarios related to being on
18 the border. We share an open border with
19 New York City.

20 So I think we have advocated, we
21 have spoken with the Governor's Office
22 multiple times, and the County Executive,
23 every time I have identified an opportunity,
24 has joined me and has been great in joining
25 me with this.

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2 Certainly I want us to have our
3 fair share and even more than that if I
4 could get it.

5 So on my end, I can say I'm
6 advocating relentlessly for our residents.
7 Sometimes it has worked in getting us
8 supplemental vaccine and I feel fully
9 supported by County Executive Curran in
10 doing that.

11 But do I want to see New York
12 City get more than us, absolutely not, I
13 want us to have our fair share. I fully
14 agree with you.

15 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: I
16 appreciate that, Dr. Eisenstein. I
17 reiterate, I think you are doing a great
18 overseeing the administration of the vaccine
19 that we are in possession of.

20 But, what I'm asking, and I'm
21 glad to see that Deputy County Executive
22 Rose-Louder is here, working so closely with
23 the County Executive, because my question is
24 more towards what exactly specifically the
25 County Executive is doing.

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2 I see that she seems to have a
3 good relationship with the governor when she
4 requests certain executive orders, they seem
5 to get done to her credit.

6 When we had the recent assessment
7 debacle with the veteran's exemption, she
8 asked for an extension of the due date of
9 the tax bills and it got done. So I think
10 that's a good thing.

11 Since that relationship exists,
12 I'm just curious to know what specifically
13 the County Executive has done and I would
14 ask Deputy County Executive Rose-Louder
15 maybe she can explain, you know, to advocate
16 for this vaccine.

17 600 extra doses is wonderful.
18 Obviously we should take every single dose
19 we can get our hands on. But that doesn't
20 change the fact that the percentages are
21 showing, the numbers are showing that a
22 disproportionate amount of vaccines are
23 going to an area that has a lower infection
24 rate.

25 You can say -- and I'm sure many

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 of us on this dais have severe disagreements
3 with Mayor Deblasio on many issues, but you
4 have to give him credit for being out there
5 and advocating to the governor directly
6 taking him on and, you know, we see the
7 results. His area is getting a
8 disproportionate amount of the vaccine.

9 So, my question is, what is the
10 County Executive doing to make this right?

11 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: I can assure
12 you that the County Executive is doing
13 everything that she can to get as much
14 vaccine for our residents as possible. That
15 means that she is on the phone with the
16 state as Dr. Eisenstein indicated daily,
17 explaining to the state what's happening
18 here on Long Island, what our needs are, the
19 capacity that we have through the Department
20 of health to do the job, and that has
21 resulted in us getting the additional doses
22 that we have been allotted up to date.

23 So it is a strong advocacy. She
24 has been relentless with it and its a daily
25 effort. It's a daily push. It's

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2 unfortunate this is not something that is
3 controlled.

4 Obviously the city gets a lot of
5 attention. They had been greatly impacted
6 and the way that the living environment is
7 of the city poses a particular challenge.
8 So there's a lot of fear with respect to how
9 they live and the ability for the numbers to
10 skyrocket there overnight.

11 So, that may be factoring. I
12 don't know. It's a speculation as to why
13 they are getting more.

14 And also, obviously, the
15 positively rate fluctuates, so that is a
16 factor. But I can tell that the County
17 Executive is doing everything that she can
18 possible do in terms of advocating for every
19 resident to get more vaccine. It is of
20 paramount concern to her. It's in the
21 forefront of everything that we are doing
22 right now.

23 The push is there. There's no
24 back sliding. There's not stepping up to
25 the plate and getting it done. That's

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2 something that she's doing every day.

3 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: Let me ask
4 you something. You may have recently see
5 the majority held a press conference calling
6 publicly on the mayor to stop the policy in
7 New York City of keeping Nassau and other
8 non-New York City residents out of the city
9 run vaccination sites.

10 Has the County Executive made any
11 public comment or issued a statement joining
12 us in demanding the New York City mayor
13 allow Nassau residents to be vaccinated at
14 these sites?

15 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: To my
16 knowledge, she has not.

17 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: When you
18 say she's has done everything that she can,
19 how about she does that because that's
20 another avenue. We have these vaccines, a
21 disproportionate amount, that are being sent
22 to New York City and we can't get them.

23 We are legally allowed to and the
24 mayor is not our residents, our seniors, our
25 veterans to do it, and, yet, the County

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 Executive has not joined us in demanding
3 that he follows the policy of the federal
4 government and allow our residents.

5 I understand and appreciate your
6 that she's stepping up to the plate and
7 doing her best. I don't see it.

8 I don't think the residents of
9 Nassau County see it and the residents are
10 demanding results, not phone calls, they
11 want results.

12 When you're telling me she's
13 doing everything she can, this is a slam
14 dunk.

15 The mayor has to let our
16 residents into New York City at those city
17 run facilities and get vaccinations. I
18 would hope that she would join us in
19 demanding that.

20 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: I will take
21 that back to her and I'm sure she will
22 consider it strongly.

23 I know we not been exclusive in
24 our pods and we had admitted residents from
25 all over the state, from all the boroughs,

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2 and that's what we've been doing.

3 Up to this most recent effort by
4 the mayor, our residents have been welcome
5 there too. So that's a change in
6 circumstance and I'm sure the County
7 Executive will consider the Legislature's
8 move and consider whether she wants to speak
9 on that as well.

10 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: I think
11 that -- we're following the guidelines. We
12 are allowing residents that are not Nassau
13 residents to come to our sites. I'm not
14 being critical of that.

15 But you have to recognize, and
16 the County Executive needs to recognize the
17 inequity here that a larger portion of the
18 vaccine is going to New York City and we
19 can't use those sites. A smaller portion of
20 the vaccine is coming to Nassau and they can
21 use ours.

22 So there's a large inequity here
23 and when you see all these emails of
24 seniors, and not even seniors, people
25 emailing on behalf of their senior parents

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 or grandparents, with real worry and
3 concern. They need results. They demand
4 results.

5 So saying you're doing everything
6 you can, and I know this isn't you, you are
7 just relaying a message, when we had a press
8 conference asking for her to join us and she
9 hasn't, it's discouraging. I hope that she
10 demands results from the governor.

11 This will be one of the few times
12 I would say, mirror what the mayor is doing
13 in taking the governor on if he's not going
14 to produce results and make sure it gets
15 done. So thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Just,
17 Dr. Eisenstein, how long do you have with
18 us?

19 DR. EISENSTEIN: I got another 15
20 minutes or so and then I have to get to the
21 pod.

22 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Why don't we
23 for the next 15 minutes direct our questions
24 to Dr. Eisenstein and then when that's
25 finished we can then resume with the Deputy

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 County Executive.

3 I believe we have Legislator
4 Rhoads, Bynoe, Walker, and Drucker in that
5 order and Kennedy.

6 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you,
7 Presiding Officer. I do have several
8 questions for the administration which I
9 will hold, they're really not directed to
10 Dr. Eisensteain, but I will ask Dr.
11 Eisenstein, again, not to beat a dead horse,
12 but I do want to compliment the Department
13 of Health and compliment you, personally, on
14 the work that you've done and your
15 department has done absolutely tremendous
16 taking what has been a mess of the state's
17 rollout of the vaccine and trying to turn it
18 into very confusing guidance, a workable
19 effort on behalf of Nassau County residents.
20 I certainly appreciate that.

21 One of the frustrations that many
22 of the residents have mentioned, the fact
23 that, for example, residents who happen to
24 have underlying health conditions were
25 approved by the governor to receive the

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 vaccine over a month ago. Yet, the state
3 hasn't issued any guidance with respect to
4 what underlying health conditions qualify
5 them to receive the vaccine.

6 So, as a result, even though they
7 are eligible, no one has been able to sign
8 up for an appointment either at a Nassau
9 County site to any of the state sites due to
10 the absence of the criteria from the
11 governor.

12 Have there been my communications
13 between our government and the Governor's
14 Office, the health department with respect
15 to that guidance and what seems to be the
16 delay?

17 DR. EISENSTEIN: Absolutely.
18 That came up each week, the governor does a
19 press conference where he mentions who's
20 going to become eligible for the following
21 week.

22 There was three or four weeks ago
23 he said I'm adding certain populations
24 including immune compromised populations but
25 the guidance defining that never came forth

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2 and that's been put on hold.

3 When I'm on my calls with all the
4 other county health commissioners and
5 directors around the state, that's a topic
6 that comes up every single call. We are
7 waiting for that guidance.

8 We understand that immune
9 compromised population is an at risk
10 population and it's something that I'm
11 advocating for but as of now I do not have
12 an answer for you.

13 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: So we've been
14 given no indication as to when that guidance
15 is going to be forthcoming?

16 DR. EISENSTEIN: No, but we are
17 pushing strongly for it because I agree with
18 you that that's a vulnerable population and
19 I think of myself at the pods, I'm there.
20 I'm doing some vaccines myself. I'm the
21 medical consultant at the pods a lot of the
22 times and I have people, I speak with people
23 face-to-face, hear their stories and I
24 sympathize and I get it.

25 I wish I had the answer as to who

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 in the immune compromise categories qualify,
3 and what conditions are considered for
4 vaccine. As soon as it is we will
5 incorporate them if it's us who is allowed
6 to vaccinate them.

7 But I have advocated strongly on
8 behalf of this, and the answer we typically
9 get is it's a matter of supply and demand.
10 As soon as there is enough vaccine to reach
11 more populations, they'll release it to us.

12 So, to answer your question, yes,
13 I have advocated strongly with the state on
14 this. I think it's important but,
15 unfortunately, I don't have the specific
16 answer of conditions yet.

17 We are not allowed -- that is not
18 an eligible criteria right now, immune
19 compromised.

20 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I guess part
21 of the frustration is what Presiding Officer
22 alluded to before. You mentioned it and
23 it's great that the state recognizes the
24 fact that they only want to make additional
25 people eligible and issue additional

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 guidance if they have the vaccine to be able
3 to provide it, but isn't it true,
4 commissioner, at this point probably
5 somewhere in the area of 900,000 out of the
6 county's 1.3 million and change population
7 is eligible for the vaccine, yet we are only
8 receiving 2,800 doses a week. The math just
9 doesn't work.

10 Is there an explanation? So many
11 people have been made eligible for the
12 vaccine when there is no vaccine supplied to
13 accommodate that population? It does simply
14 lead to confusion and frustration and
15 aggravation on the part of many residents,
16 and only heightens their fears being
17 eligible for something and not being able to
18 get it.

19 DR. EISENSTEIN: So there is no
20 doubt there are hundreds of thousands of
21 eligible residents in Nassau County and it's
22 frustrating for us that I only have 2,800
23 doses knowing that.

24 We've had days where we've made
25 the link online for appointments available

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2 and 600 or 700 doses have gone in under two
3 minutes.

4 I'm out in front of the press
5 with County Executive Curran and we keep
6 saying the same message, get us more vaccine
7 and we will get it into more arms.

8 But, absolutely, 2,800 supply for
9 us is not going to meet the demands right
10 now of hundreds of thousands of people. So
11 I agree with you.

12 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I do have
13 several questions from residents and I do
14 want to cover one or two of them.

15 The question is, if wedding
16 attendees can take a COVID test to attend an
17 event, why can't a family member do the same
18 to visit a loved one in a hospital or a
19 nursing home?

20 DR. EISENSTEIN: The governor
21 just mentioned that that's going to be a
22 requirement when catering halls are open for
23 weddings in the middle of March.

24 The guidance on how that's going
25 to work or what the requirement is has not

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 come out yet. So it may be when that comes
3 out that there is that kind of allotment. I
4 think we are going to have to also
5 reevaluate as more people are vaccinated,
6 what's going to be the requirement for them
7 to attend an event as they are considered
8 immune, but the science is still not
9 finalized on their ability to transmit
10 although I think it's unlikely because
11 that's typically how respiratory viruses
12 work.

13 It's a fair question but the
14 guidance even on weddings, weddings and
15 other parties, as well as bar mitzvahs,
16 sweet 16s, is it just big corporate
17 gatherings? We don't know what that's going
18 to entail yet. So that question may be
19 answered in the guidance that comes.

20 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: So
21 specifically with respect to -- and, look,
22 the problems that the governor's guidance
23 has visited upon nursing homes is well
24 documented, certainly what occurred in the
25 early part of the spring, and now with the

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 information that the numbers may have been
3 purposely under reported, I've gotten
4 several comments and questions specifically
5 about the ability to visit residents inside
6 of nursing home. As I indicated, in a
7 private conversation, my own grandmother
8 passed away in a nursing home from COVID
9 right at the start of the pandemic. We
10 weren't able to visit, there is no funeral,
11 wake, nothing.

12 People want to be able to get in
13 and see their relatives. If they have a
14 test, if they've been vaccinated, is there
15 any indication on the part of the governor
16 as to whether or not they are going to be
17 permitted to visit their relatives who they
18 haven't been able to see since basically
19 March?

20 DR. EISENSTEIN: I think it's a
21 fair question. I think the role that
22 testing is going to play in allowing a lot
23 of aspects of society to open up, I think
24 they are working on that as I'm reading the
25 tea leaves. But I have not gotten any

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 specifics on that yet. So I think we'll
3 hopefully see guidance along those lines in
4 the next few weeks.

5 But to answer the question, no, I
6 don't know of any specific mechanism yet
7 regarding that kind of visitation and how
8 testing might work.

9 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I know your
10 time is limited and I know other legislators
11 have questions specifically for you so I'm
12 going to defer the remainder of my questions
13 but I have one last one.

14 You, by specialty for residents
15 that don't know, you are an epidemiologist
16 in private practice, you are an infectious
17 disease doctor, that was your specialty,
18 correct?

19 DR. EISENSTEIN: I am board
20 certified infectious disease specialist
21 still, but I'm not in practice because I'm
22 your commissioner.

23 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: And thank God
24 you are the perfect man in the perfect place
25 for this particular pandemic for Nassau

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 County. We appreciate everything that you
3 have done.

4 Based on your knowledge and
5 expertise, has the state ever bothered to
6 consult with you, or any other doctors that
7 you're aware of on a local level in our
8 individual health departments, as to how
9 this vaccine distribution system was going
10 to be set up, as far as what guidance is
11 going to be issued as far as how any of the
12 pandemic was going to be handled, or is
13 everything coming out of the executive
14 chamber essentially however they decide to
15 do it?

16 DR. EISENSTEIN: So, to answer
17 your question, nobody has consulted with me
18 specifically based on my expertise as an
19 infectious disease specialist.

20 I am on calls with the state
21 health department virtually multiple times a
22 week. And I'm also the chair of the New
23 York State Association of County Health
24 Officials Disease Control Committee. I am I
25 think the only infectious disease doctor who

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2 is a commissioner or a director of health in
3 all of New York State. I am the chair of
4 that.

5 I do get to speak with the state
6 health department, make our concerns heard,
7 make our questions asked. We some get
8 answers and we sometimes don't.

9 My line of command is up through
10 the state health department. They hear our
11 concerns and questions. Once those calls
12 end, I assume they go up to the chamber. I
13 don't where they go through Albany's
14 pathway, but has anybody reached out to me
15 specific to my infectious disease expertise,
16 no.

17 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: So no one
18 form the Governor's Office has ever been in
19 contact with you?

20 DR. EISENSTEIN: Well, we've been
21 in contact but not particular for me being
22 an infectious disease specialist.

23 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: No one from
24 the Governor's Office has consulted with you
25 based on your expertise?

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2 DR. EISENSTEIN: No.

3 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: No. I have
4 no other questions for Dr. Eisenstein. But
5 I will reserve.

6 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Legislator
7 Bynoe has questions for the administration
8 but not the doctor, so we will come back to
9 her. Legislator Walker for Dr. Eisenstein.

10 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Yes.
11 Dr. Eisenstein, I, too, I know we say it
12 over and over, but I want to thank you and
13 thank all your staff and all of the
14 volunteers for the excellent job you are
15 doing.

16 We try to make our residents
17 realize that you are doing everything
18 possible that you can but unfortunately your
19 hands are tied and you have to follow the
20 guidelines that the state is setting up as
21 far as who you can give the vaccines to.
22 Certainly the number of vaccines we have,
23 and so on and so forth. Again, thank you to
24 all of you.

25 Have you and the other health

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2 departments throughout the state, like you
3 said before, this is something that you are
4 prepared for, you have a plan for,
5 especially vaccinations, so on and so forth,
6 yet, you kind of reached out to get any of
7 your expertise or let you take the lead in
8 that in the fact that you know what you are
9 supposed to be doing.

10 Have you all reached out to the
11 state and to the governor in saying, like,
12 what happened here, why all of a sudden do
13 you have to be the king here and do what you
14 set out to do and kind of leave us out of
15 the picture when we've been prepared to do
16 this all along?

17 DR. EISENSTEIN: So I'm on the
18 board of directors of the New York State
19 Association of County Health Officials. I
20 was the president a few years back. I'm
21 also the disease control committee chairman.
22 That's the association of all the health
23 directors and commissioners of every county
24 in New York State.

25 We have an executive director who

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 communicates with the state health
3 department and executive chamber on our
4 behalf because there are 63 different
5 counties.

6 We speak with the state health
7 department frequently. Once in a while
8 executive chambers does join the calls.

9 We have sent our concerns on
10 numerous issues, as we do with any topic,
11 and make our recommendations and ask our
12 questions.

13 So I have both advocated
14 individually and through the association of
15 our concerns, our recommendations.

16 You know, we've been asked why
17 we've been at the sites we're at with our
18 pods and that's because those are
19 pre-approved plan sites where we have done
20 drills that we know work because they're
21 pre-approved by the state.

22 So you know we're at Nassau
23 Community College, you know we're at the Yes
24 We Can Center. Those are locations one and
25 two on our pandemic plan. We've done drills

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 in those locations. We have held pods in
3 those locations.

4 After Super Storm Sandy, if you
5 remember, the special needs shelter that the
6 health department ran was at Nassau
7 Community College in the same room we are
8 giving vaccines now.

9 We follow our plan. The hub
10 designation was something new for us that
11 Northwell was going to be at coordinating
12 factor. Now, we have a great relationship
13 with Northwell. We are in communication
14 with them. They have been a great partner.
15 They have helped us when we needed help in
16 all kinds of ways.

17 But that was something new to us.
18 So we adjusted it. We asked our questions.
19 I don't have a direct line to the executive
20 chamber.

21 There is also for the county a
22 control room call that we have in the
23 administration, a control room
24 representative, that speaks with one of the
25 governor's representatives to talk about not

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 necessarily health related issues but any
3 COVID related issues ranging from what are
4 the local business requirements and that
5 sort of thing. So there was a group put
6 together. Those calls happen frequently.

7 So I take the health route
8 through my health lanes and there is a
9 control room so we do the best we can but I
10 don't have a direct line to, for example,
11 the executive chamber. Buy my concerns and
12 letters do get there, I believe.

13 LEGISLATOR WALKER: As I stated
14 to you before in many of our phone calls, I
15 wish you were the man in charge because I
16 think things would have been rolled out a
17 lot differently and certainly a lot better.

18 DR. EISENSTEIN: Thank you.

19 LEGISLATOR WALKER: And I know
20 that we have emphasized this and you,
21 certainly, when you are able to give the
22 vaccines to our seniors, I was at the pods.
23 The pods are amazing, doing a great job
24 there. To see our seniors there, literally
25 crying because they're so happy they are

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 able to get the vaccine.

3 Unfortunately we get the phone
4 calls too from those crying or their
5 children crying in the fact that they aren't
6 able to get an appointment, can't set
7 something up. We have senior housing that
8 if we can do something there, bring in the
9 vaccine to them. They could all be
10 vaccinated right there at their senior
11 housing complexes.

12 I know we did that with nursing
13 homes, not the county, but whether it was
14 pharmacies or whatever. But anything that
15 we can do to -- I mean, most of the emails
16 that we have gotten, phone calls, are in
17 regards to the senior population; some who
18 don't even have internet capacity or don't
19 know how to utilize it to get an
20 appointment.

21 I also had some questions from
22 people who are a single parent. They lost
23 their husband or raising their children on
24 their own or lost their wife and raising
25 their children on their own. They are very,

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 very concerned because, although they might
3 be younger and don't fall into any of those
4 categories yet, they are the sole providers
5 and the sole person taking care of these
6 young children and they are very frightened.
7 They feel they are so far down the list to
8 even be able to be eligible to get a
9 vaccine. Of course they have reached out to
10 see what can be done for them.

11 I know I spoke to you yesterday
12 too about now that we have sports beginning
13 back in our schools which is wonderful for
14 all those playing sports and hopefully doing
15 the right thing, to think about, what about
16 our officials that don't fall into any other
17 categories. They are looking to be able to
18 get the vaccine because they will be working
19 closely with our children.

20 I don't want to hold you up. You
21 have to get to your pod, but thank you for
22 everything that you're doing and anything
23 that we can assist you with we will
24 certainly keep reaching out to the state to
25 do what is right for all of our residents

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 here in Nassau County who deserve everything
3 that they should be able to get.

4 Again, you are not holding it up
5 but, in many ways, the state isn't doing the
6 right thing by our residents.

7 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Legislator
8 Drucker.

9 DR. EISENSTEIN: I want to thank
10 you. The official thing is, I always
11 appreciate feedback from the Legislature.
12 That's the sort of thing I immediately took
13 up because in all of my work that's
14 something in thinking about it that we need
15 to advocate for. You are absolutely right.

16 I do appreciate the support.
17 It's great that you and some of the other
18 Legislators came to visit us. It's great
19 for our morale and our staff and medical
20 core volunteers who we have to thank that
21 are volunteering their time. Many of the
22 people vaccinating on many days, the
23 majority of the vaccinators themselves are
24 doctors and nurses donating their time to do
25 it. It's very rewarding work.

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2 I do have to reiterate, when I do
3 feel that there is something that we need to
4 address, I feel very supportive by the
5 administration. They are always backing me,
6 always giving me -- the County Executive and
7 I are out in front of the press and trying
8 to get as many needles into arms as we can.

9 Like I've said, 2,800 is a
10 frustrating low number for us, but I do feel
11 very supported by the County Executive, I
12 feel supported by the Legislature. I'm very
13 appreciative for the staff and the medical
14 reserve core, and I have time for one more
15 question, Presiding Officer, and then I got
16 to run.

17 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Legislator
18 Drucker.

19 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Thank you,
20 Presiding Officer, and I would echo the
21 sentiments of all of my colleagues here.

22 Dr. Eisenstein, it's been about a
23 year now that you have been front and center
24 during this pandemic from the early stages
25 and throughout the summer and now with the

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 vaccination process you have been there too.
3 You have always been a great resource to the
4 legislative staff and us legislators and
5 everyone else. I want to thank you also.

6 DR. EISENSTEIN: Thank you.

7 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: I think the
8 consensus today is clear that the problems
9 that we've been having are really emanating
10 from the State of New York and perhaps, you
11 know, Presiding Officer we could have asked
12 someone from the state Department of Health
13 to come down today and answer a lot of
14 questions we have. I think that would have
15 been very helpful too since it's clear that
16 the county is beholding to the state on
17 these issues.

18 But I have one question because a
19 lot of the questions have been asked Dr.
20 Eisenstein.

21 If you had to identify one area
22 or an area the distribution process that was
23 flawed or what, if anything, would you have
24 done differently in getting the vaccines
25 into people's arms?

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2 DR. EISENSTEIN: That is a
3 complicated question but I think that I
4 would love to have some time to mull that
5 over because we do a running hot washes
6 which is reviews of what's gone well and
7 what can be improved.

8 I think the single most important
9 thing that has been difficult for us is we
10 haven't had an electronic system that has
11 helped us with things like -- so, for
12 example, when we were able to make
13 appointments online, the system would keep
14 crashing in the middle of the day that
15 slowed the pods down. It made it
16 frustrating for people to get appointments.
17 They would go on see an appointment
18 available and click the button and, before
19 they could finish their registration, the
20 system would go down.

21 That is something that is being
22 done state wide. So a local system would
23 have been created and our IT group, I want
24 to thank them, they have been incredible
25 working with us around the clock.

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2 They are in the middle of
3 creating an electronic platform for us where
4 we will fully be able to make appointments
5 and schedule and send reminder emails and
6 schedule second dosing.

7 But the system we were originally
8 given, every shot that we give has to be
9 registered through the state system called
10 NYSIR, the New York State Immunization
11 Registry. That's the law.

12 So our system has to be eligible
13 to enter into theirs. Electronically it's
14 been frustrating because we've been reliant
15 on a different system that has had numerous
16 issues. It has caused people a lot of
17 frustration and it's not something that we
18 could plan ahead of time because we didn't
19 know what our roll in this was going to be.

20 Now that we do, we are still only
21 vaccinating less than a month and I think
22 that's really important. Our first doses
23 that the health department gave were on
24 January 5th. It's been less than a month.

25 The strides that we have taken

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 from an IT and an operational standpoint as
3 far as dealing with the situation that we
4 have in front of us, amending our plans to
5 work in all of these components, to accept
6 that the hub is overseeing vaccine
7 distribution, and we are part of that
8 processing, all of these things have
9 happened are still less than a month. It's
10 only February 4th. Tomorrow will be a month
11 since we gave our first dose.

12 I think that obviously the thing
13 that would have been great is if there was
14 more vaccine for us. That would be the easy
15 thing for me to say. I wish we had more
16 vaccine. That is absolutely without a doubt
17 the answer, I wish we had more vaccine,

18 Your question is deeper than
19 that. We talked about that numerous times
20 already today.

21 I think for us, having an IT
22 infrastructure, a program in place that
23 would have been less difficult for the
24 public was something that might have been
25 helpful but thanks to our IT internally,

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 and, again, I got the resources I needed
3 from my boss and County Executive and now I
4 think going forward in the near future
5 that's going to be rectified and, as more
6 vaccine becomes available, I think there
7 will be much more of a friendly customer
8 satisfying experience for Nassau County
9 residents as they try to get appointments
10 and second dose appointments.

11 Second dose appointments are
12 going great already and that's because of
13 our in-house IT team. So I can say that.

14 I would like more time to mull
15 over that question if I could fix one thing,
16 but, definitely, the one thing I would fix
17 immediately is if there was more vaccine of
18 course. I know everybody feels that way.

19 But, for me, operationally, it
20 would be a smoother IT component because
21 people have been frustrated and, you're
22 right, it's equally frustrating for us when
23 we have a line of people to vaccinate and a
24 full army of vaccinators, and the system
25 crashes and we then have to pull out the

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 paper and do it all on paper rather than
3 just click go on the computer and give a
4 vaccine and let the person move on. We have
5 to write all the information in when the
6 system crashes and put it in later.

7 Those are the kind of delays,
8 although it doesn't happen that often, when
9 it does it backs things up and it's much
10 more of an efficiency strain on us.

11 That's I think what I would say
12 right now but I would love more time to
13 reevaluate my answer to that question.

14 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Sure. Thank
15 you. So is it fair to say, Dr. Eisenstein,
16 that your discretion and your authority in
17 the distribution process is limited or
18 controlled by the state or the federal
19 government and hampered in that way?

20 DR. EISENSTEIN: So we've been
21 given an assignment as to who we can
22 vaccinate. We've been given a limit as to
23 how much vaccine we are getting and we find
24 out on the weekends for the following week.
25 There have been days where our vaccine has

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 arrived Tuesday in the morning and Tuesday
3 by noon they're being used.

4 We were limited to the state's IT
5 system which we are now developing our own
6 internally and that process has been great
7 but as far as operating our pods, we are
8 following our plan. It's one of the most
9 important things we teach in emergency
10 preparedness is you have a plan, you have to
11 tweak it based on unforeseen circumstances
12 but we communicate with the hub at
13 Northwell. We are part of a greater
14 operation which is the hub region
15 vaccinating all of Long Island. We are just
16 a piece of that.

17 Once we get our assignment as to
18 who we vaccinate. Once we get the allotment
19 of vaccine, I think we've been judicious,
20 we've been fast and efficient in getting our
21 full allotment of vaccine into a full
22 allotment of eligible recipients and we have
23 prioritized and done it fairly so every
24 sector has gotten a percentage of it.

25 So, yes, we are limited as far

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 as, do I like the idea right now that we
3 can't vaccinate seniors? No, I said it to
4 you as a Legislature probably a hundred
5 times, they are the most vulnerable
6 population. That's not assigned to us right
7 now.

8 Would I like to be able to
9 vaccinate seniors, yes, it's very
10 uncomfortable to me when I'm at a pod and
11 they're telling me about their senior
12 parents and I'm unable to vaccinate them.
13 But we have to attest legally that we are
14 vaccinating who we are eligible to
15 vaccinate.

16 But, as far as the actual
17 operations of running our pods, once you
18 take all the factors out that we have no
19 control over, I feel that my staff has
20 operated almost perfectly. We have followed
21 our plan. The pods are going great.

22 I can't tell you, I spend a lot
23 of time just speaking with our residents and
24 so many of them say, wow, I've heard so many
25 horror stories. This is totally different.

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2 Yes, it's totally different because this is
3 what we do. This is why you have a health
4 department.

5 It's unfortunate that for a
6 health department our time to shine always
7 seems to be when something terrible is
8 happening but I do want the Legislature to
9 rest assured that we are prepared for this,
10 we were prepared for this. We've been going
11 seven days a week around the clock since
12 February.

13 Our call center, there are days
14 our call center has taken many many
15 thousands of calls. They were open on
16 Christmas on New Year's and on Thanksgiving.
17 That's because my workforce is willing to do
18 it. It's lifesaving work. So all we can
19 control is how we do within the parameters
20 that we're given. Within those parameters I
21 think it's been an amazing response. It's a
22 credit to the staff and the medical reserve
23 corp and the leadership that's given me all
24 support that I can.

25 So thank you again to the County

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 Executive and all of you for your support.

3 Are there things outside of my
4 control that I would like to see different,
5 of course. But I do want to thank
6 Northwell. They've been a great partner and
7 I'm in communication with them every day.

8 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: In your
9 opinion, doctor, has the County Executive
10 done all that she can to advocate for and
11 protect our most vulnerable population?

12 DR. EISENSTEIN: Absolutely. And
13 she's always accessible to me, 24 hours,
14 seven days a week. For somebody in my
15 position, that's the most important thing
16 when I need to speak with my boss or I need
17 something that they are available.

18 All of the deputy county
19 executives, Deputy County Executive
20 Santeramo, Deputy County Executive
21 Rose-Louder who is there and the Chief
22 Deputy County Executive Williams, and the
23 County Executive herself, we are
24 communicating multiple times every day,
25 multiple times. It's basically one long on

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 going conversation.

3 I always felt that when I need to
4 get a message through, it is immediate when
5 I call and I also appreciate that they
6 consult me, they ask me my medical
7 expertise, my opinion, and it's nice to work
8 in a place where I feel so supported during
9 what has been for everybody a very difficult
10 time.

11 I am very comfortable and I feel
12 the same way about the Legislature too.
13 It's a pleasure for me to be on the calls
14 with you.

15 I don't always have the perfect
16 answer but I think the communication has
17 been really good and many of you call me,
18 you know that, I try to be accessible to
19 everybody. Sometimes it takes a little
20 while for me to get back to you especially
21 if I'm actually vaccinating. I want to keep
22 the phone right there on the table.

23 I want to thank you all as well.
24 For as difficult as this has been, for me
25 feeling supported by my boss and everybody

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 around me, that has not been a problem.

3 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Thank you
4 very much, doctor.

5 DR. EISENSTEIN: I'm going to run
6 to the pod now and thank you very much and
7 certainly any follow-up questions we will
8 have more chance to discuss.

9 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Thank you,
10 Dr. Eisenstein, and get to the pod safely.
11 Thank you. Legislator Bynoe.

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you,
13 Legislator Walker. Good morning. How are
14 you? I would have liked to have thank
15 Dr. Larry for all he's done, but in the
16 interest of time I will make those accolades
17 in his absence. I want every one to have a
18 direct question for him to speak.

19 But I am very, very thankful for
20 his service during this time from handling
21 the initial pandemic to now trying to get to
22 the recovery piece of it where we're doing
23 the vaccinations.

24 I had the opportunity to visit a
25 pod at the Yes We Can Center and it does run

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2 very smoothly and the process is guided by
3 many that are volunteering. Strict
4 volunteers and then you have people who are
5 volunteering from other departments.

6 So I would like to thank also the
7 commissioners of the Department of Social
8 Services as well as the Department of Human
9 Services. I know that I've seen
10 Commissioner McCummings at that site as
11 well.

12 So, I want to start first by
13 thanking the county and thanking the County
14 Executive's team for some of the work that
15 was done in an effort to ensure access for
16 our most vulnerable populations.

17 Very early on, I was very
18 cognizant of the fact that seniors would
19 have a problem utilizing the website.

20 So I made the call over to Chief
21 Deputy County Executive Helena Williams and
22 requested a meeting. I believe you were on
23 the call. I know Dr. Larry was and a few
24 other folks on the call and that's when we
25 talked about there needing to be a call

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2 center locally here at the county.

3 I also had concerns about how we
4 would even notify people living in public
5 housing and the like and if we could go to
6 those sites and put the needle in the arm.
7 Immediately there were a lot of different
8 ideas that were being put forward on the
9 phone. I would commend you because it was
10 the county, because you could see there was
11 a willingness there.

12 We talked about going to the
13 different sites and Dr. Larry talked about
14 how incredibly challenging that would be to
15 go to the senior centers or to even the
16 housing authority senior housing locations
17 and talked about getting centralized spot
18 and I said, well, transportation will be an
19 issue, can we contact NICE Bus, and
20 everything was yes, yes, yes, let's do this.

21 I think probably one of the more
22 impactful things that we were able to do was
23 to set up the phone lines.

24 Senior they can't navigate this.
25 They're going to need help.

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2 Immediately, including Williams
3 said we're set this up, we're going to get a
4 phone line. She explained to me how she
5 would do it. It would be different
6 departments throughout the county that would
7 be part of this phone tree.

8 So folks sitting in the Office of
9 Minority Affairs, Hispanic Affairs, Health
10 Center, Aging, will get these calls sitting
11 at their desk.

12 So I said, Perfect, that will
13 work. I can't remember but I think the call
14 was like on a Tuesday. I'm going to say
15 maybe January 10 or 11 or whatever it was.
16 By the next day I had the phone number. By
17 the next day the phone number was set up and
18 it was going to go live by the following
19 Monday and we were going to be able to take
20 these sort of registrations over the phone
21 and community organizations, local mayors,
22 everybody was going to be a part of getting
23 these names and getting them over to the
24 centers so folks can make the calls and
25 register the folks. It was working very

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2 well.

3 Disappointing to me that we came
4 across a barrier that was not of our own
5 making of the state that by their directive
6 we could not vaccinate seniors.

7 So it was incredibly
8 disappointing to me because representing the
9 Westbury New Cassel community, New Cassel
10 having a pod in its backyard, and I stated
11 when it was opened, when we had the press
12 conference, to make sure that the larger
13 community new about that pod, that I thought
14 it was great that we came right in the
15 backyard of front line workers and we were
16 going to vaccinate some of the most impacted
17 residents of our community and be able to
18 give them vaccinations.

19 Not lost on me, is just across
20 the street from the Yes We Can Center are
21 two senior developments. You have Magnolia
22 Gardens with about 91 units. It's public
23 housing.

24 Right next door to that you have
25 a low income tax credit property. I think

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 it's 77 units, 77 residents that live there
3 or more than that, 77 units there. That
4 being said, we are now -- what's troubling
5 me is the state has created the situation
6 where the folks who live in those buildings
7 who did not get the shot in the immediate
8 week or so are now going to have to travel.
9 They're going to have to travel to the
10 nearest location to them is now in East
11 Meadow.

12 They are going to have to travel
13 if they have a car or have the ability to be
14 transported by vehicle, the direct vehicle
15 is going to take them nine minutes to get
16 there. While they're sitting there, looking
17 at this pod, looking at people coming from
18 all over Nassau County getting vaccinated
19 and they're shut out.

20 Those who don't have a car now
21 have to travel 50 minutes by public
22 transportation if they are physically able
23 to do so.

24 So this is incredibly troubling
25 to me as it is for all my colleagues here

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 who are representing their communities and
3 have these heartbreaking stories of seniors
4 who can't get a vaccination.

5 So they can't get it for a
6 multitude of different reasons that I just
7 laid out. Technology is not always afforded
8 to them, okay? If they do have it, you
9 know, it's not an easy site to navigate.
10 Then transportation would be the other
11 piece.

12 So, I am troubled about how the
13 state has rolled this out. I really really
14 would like to see a considerable amount of
15 pressure put on the state to allow us to
16 localize a plan for how we can distribute
17 the vaccine in a way that meets the needs of
18 our communities that we serve.

19 I am concerned that we're going
20 to shut people out from being able to get
21 this vaccine while they're looking at pods.
22 The Nassau Community College, it's right
23 across the street from Uniondale, from some
24 of the folks, one of the other highly
25 impacted communities, what kind of access do

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 they have to that site?

3 We're going to have to put the
4 pressure on the state to understand what our
5 concerns are, what our shortcomings are here
6 and our inability to meet the needs of the
7 folks that we serve directly. I really do
8 think we need to do that.

9 I'm going to ask a couple of
10 questions but I did want to start out by
11 thanking the county because I do believe the
12 willingness was there but we have been
13 handicapped.

14 So, one of my first questions is,
15 does the state even provide the county a
16 list of the proper pods that they're going
17 to have, and, moreover, do they provide you
18 with a list of these pharmacies that
19 actually have the shots so that we can then
20 communicate directly to our residents where
21 they can go and get the shot?

22 Because I happen to come upon the
23 four sites on Facebook. That's how I
24 learned about the four sites. Is the state
25 providing you with a list at all of these

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 sites that are providing the vaccines?

3 MR. GIULIANO: Good afternoon.

4 We were on a state wide conference call
5 where I believe it was on Sunday where they
6 told us that Walgreens was going to start
7 rolling out some of these outfits and there
8 were going to be four sites. I don't
9 believe they specifically mentioned it on
10 that call.

11 I do know that they were going to
12 send out to the public health directors and
13 commissioners more information on that.
14 That's not something I received, but they
15 were looking to send out some more
16 information as to where these specific sites
17 were

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I think we
19 have to communicate to the state that we're
20 going to need that information. If they're
21 not going to let us vaccinate our seniors,
22 then they need to give us the information so
23 we can provide it to the seniors.

24 MR. GIULIANO: Okay.

25 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And then I

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 think we -- I honestly think they should be
3 setting aside, and allowing us a certain
4 allocation for just seniors every week. I
5 don't care, if they give us 600 last week,
6 give us 20 percent of the allocation that
7 comes down on a weekly basis and allow us to
8 vaccinate seniors, or those -- and I would
9 go further when we open up for those that
10 have underlying conditions also be
11 considered in that same pool, because we
12 know that they may also have trouble
13 transporting.

14 I think the governor has done a
15 wonderful job in dealing with the pandemic.
16 I think in this particular aspect, he's got
17 to give us the freedom to localize a little
18 bit. I think asking for a certain
19 percentage of the allocation to be granted
20 to those populations would be extremely
21 helpful. Then I'm going to go a step
22 further and request that the county consider
23 keeping up that senior phone line that was
24 created just so they can help seniors who
25 don't have computers, people that might be

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 visually impaired to be able to register to
3 get the shot.

4 Although it's not of our doing
5 that they can't come to us, but we can still
6 help them to get to the Walgreens or the
7 state sites by providing that service. I
8 think it would be extremely helpful.

9 MR. GIULIANO: So I can tell you
10 that this county has done more vaccinations,
11 we have done more vaccinations in the state
12 than any non hospital entity has done.

13 Because of that, because we have
14 been able to get more than 100 percent of
15 the doses into the arms by utilizing that
16 extra dose that is sometimes available, the
17 state did give us, we were able to wrangle
18 out -- I shouldn't say we, I should say the
19 health commissioner and administration were
20 able to wrangle out those extra 600 doses
21 that we did get earlier on to do the seniors
22 and I know they continue to fight for that.

23 We are going to continue to fight
24 for that. We did so well. They were
25 willing to allow us to continue to get some

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 extra seniors doses but we will continue
3 that fight. I know that they're doing that
4 basically on an every day basis for seniors.

5 With respect to those who are
6 immune compromised and others, we know it
7 was mentioned on one of the governor's
8 briefings. We have been looking and waiting
9 to seek guidance from the state and it
10 hasn't and we continue to wait and watch and
11 we will continue to ask when we might be
12 able to expect that.

13 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Again, my
14 frustration is really directed at the folks
15 that are managing this process and I know
16 it's not Nassau County.

17 I again applaud you and my
18 passion comes from the frustration that I'm
19 experiencing in trying to help the seniors.

20 I was in Stop and Shop the other
21 day and I was like shocked, folks were just
22 coming around me. They wanted vaccinations.
23 It was overwhelming, but I was pleased too
24 because we do know that we face a challenge
25 where certain portions of the population

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 don't want the vaccine.

3 But here I was being confronted
4 by folks who wanted the vaccine and I can't
5 get it for them.

6 One woman has an appointment in
7 March up in Binghamton to get the
8 vaccination. People are willing to travel
9 to get it. We've got to do the very best
10 that we can to get the state to hear us.

11 I've actually contacted some of
12 the state task force members, the folks on
13 the social equity task force and spoken to
14 them directly too about what our needs are
15 here too. They are advocating because they
16 live here, they live locally and they are in
17 alignment with what we would like to do
18 here. It is frustrating.

19 Then my next question is about
20 teachers, right? We saw that whole
21 districts were getting this opportunity to
22 get vaccinated.

23 My phone was blowing up from
24 locals ringing, ringing, ringing from local
25 superintendents saying how can we get our

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 teachers vaccinated. We are serving the
3 most impacted communities and we are closing
4 schools on a regular basis because our
5 teachers are getting tested and coming up
6 positive for COVID.

7 I applaud the county again,
8 because I think you did Sewanaka, and I know
9 you worked with me to help get Hempstead and
10 also to get some vaccinations in the arms of
11 teachers and faculty in Westbury and
12 Hempstead as well.

13 Is there a plan for moving
14 forward with teachers? Because Dr. Larry
15 just said today that teachers are the
16 priority this week.

17 Is there a plan to try and help
18 other school districts be able to have the
19 opportunity to get the shot in the arm?

20 MR. GIULIANO: Yes, and I can
21 answer that because we are happy to say that
22 starting actually yesterday and going
23 through Monday we have set up likes for
24 teachers from public schools and nonpublic
25 schools and not just the teachers, for the

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 paraprofessionals and the employees of all
3 these school districts to go ahead and sign
4 up for the majority of the doses that we
5 have for the next four or five days.

6 A link opened two days ago.
7 Thousands signed up. A link opened last
8 night. Another one or 2,000 people were
9 able to sign up to go ahead and obtain these
10 doses. Communications were sent to BOCES
11 and superintendents so they can alert all of
12 their teachers in all the school districts
13 that these links were open.

14 I know that they all filled up
15 and so for the next four or five days we are
16 going to be working most exclusively with
17 those teachers to get them all vaccinated
18 and get them back into the schools.

19 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Then my last
20 and final question is going to be regarding
21 this new group that I guess we have some
22 local ability to localize the ability to
23 make a decision here regarding taxi drivers
24 I think it is; is that correct?

25 MR. GIULIANO: Again, we did

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 hear, on our governor's live stream that it
3 was going to be opened up to employees of
4 restaurants and taxi drivers and Uber
5 drivers and people of that nature.

6 We have not seen not seen the
7 guidance on that. The guidance we are
8 working under right now has not yet been
9 modified or amended to include those
10 individuals.

11 I can expect that should come
12 down some point in the very near future but
13 until we get that we are still not able to
14 do that population. We expect that guidance
15 to come out very shortly.

16 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So my only
17 question regarding that is, would that
18 include Uber Eats or any of those types of
19 food delivery services? If they are
20 strictly Uber Eats or Grub Hub or what have
21 you, I would think they should be considered
22 and included because they probably have the
23 most ability to transmit the disease
24 insomuch as they are delivering food to
25 dozens of homes in a day.

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2 If they are not included, I would
3 ask we consider questioning the state about
4 including them as well. All right. I'm
5 going to end here. Again, thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: We have
7 Legislator Kennedy, DeRiggi-Whitton,
8 Birnbaum, Schaefer and Rhoads.

9 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Thank you,
10 Chairman. Hi. How are you? It's been a
11 long one.

12 I want to thank you for
13 everything that you are doing in the health
14 department. I wish I had the opportunity to
15 thank Dr. Eisenstein as well. I know I
16 personally along with a lot of other
17 Legislators have been on the phone with him,
18 calling him, talking, texting him at nine,
19 10 o'clock at night, weekends, and I know he
20 has been working around the clock and as I'm
21 sure all of you have. It's been a very
22 difficult time.

23 You have been handed a very hard
24 hand to deal with. From the beginning we
25 would say that it was really difficult, and

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 then quickly, very quickly, I think less
3 than six days we went from age 75 and over
4 to age 65 and over. When, at that point, we
5 were really having a difficult time keeping
6 up with those that are 75 and older.

7 I know my mother-in-law is in the
8 next group, the 65, and myself, my wife and
9 my mother-in-law have been working around
10 the clock we haven't been able to manage to
11 secure an appointment.

12 In the state that's close, let's
13 put it that way. It does seem like the
14 dozens and dozens of phone calls, from
15 people in my district, every one is facing
16 the same problem, and it's mostly seniors
17 that are facing this issue who have
18 difficulty navigating the internet and it's
19 just a lot and we're living in a time when
20 it's scary and a lot of people are very
21 scared.

22 Earlier Legislator Ferretti had
23 said that New York City is getting more,
24 about two percent more based on the
25 population vaccines than we are here in

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 Nassau County.

3 Then, also, I know that in the
4 city they're restricting people from Nassau
5 County to come in, and I know that just
6 makes me question -- I don't understand how
7 the mayor can get away with this. I wonder
8 if you can help me here.

9 Why can a site within New York
10 City, which was developed in partnership
11 with New York State, restrict access based
12 on residency when in a county, pursuant to
13 New York State rules, Nassau was told that
14 such behavior violates New York State rules.
15 Do you know how they can get away with that?
16 I don't understand. We can't, right?

17 MR. GIULIANO: No. We are, in
18 fact, when we have residents from other
19 counties, from Suffolk County, or from a
20 city borough, we are vaccinating them. That
21 has not been a large number, but they do
22 show up and we are vaccinating them.

23 We are especially concerned of
24 course with those that may live in these
25 other places but actually specifically work

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 here in Nassau County, we want to get them
3 vaccinated. I don't have an answer to your
4 question. That would have to come from the
5 state.

6 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Right.
7 Thank you. That is, of course, the problem
8 from the state we've been dealt many
9 difficult problems that need to be
10 addressed.

11 That, for one, I would just love
12 to see the County Executive talking to the
13 governor more often, more frequently, to try
14 and make him realize that here on Long
15 Island, Nassau County, that we are facing
16 the same difficulties that they are in other
17 parts of the state, and that we need,
18 especially our senior population, who is
19 really struggling, and the population
20 disabled.

21 Just last night I had an email
22 from someone. She said, prior to the
23 pandemic, her daughter had attended a
24 Cerebral Palsy centers.

25 Now, the woman, she, her mother,

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 is a caretaker for her daughter and they
3 have been housebound since the start of the
4 virus.

5 She is upset that both her and
6 her daughter may not be eligible to get the
7 vaccine at this time since the governor has
8 decided that local governments will now
9 decide if there are enough doses for the
10 disabled. That's one person but I'm sure
11 there are many many people who have the same
12 question, someone who is housebound for
13 about a year now. I'm wondering what we can
14 do about helping other people?

15 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: Well, the
16 guidance just came out this week for us to
17 start prioritizing those that fall under the
18 auspicious of the Office of People with
19 Developmental Disability. So we just
20 started working on this challenging group.
21 They present with a number of issues. Some
22 are very high functioning and ambulatory and
23 we can serve them without -- as we do most
24 of the other population. Some will require
25 a different model to get them vaccinated.

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2 We are just starting to sort
3 through that. This is a population that we
4 don't have a lot of direct contact with
5 because they are more monitored and managed
6 by the state.

7 However, what we found is that
8 they're not out there on their own. They
9 have case coordinators they have connections
10 with the health care providers that see them
11 on a regular basis.

12 So, what we are exploring now is
13 tapping into that resource that is already
14 out there for this population. Not to
15 reinvent the wheel, but if we have a person
16 who sees their healthcare provider on a
17 regular basis, that may be the best way to
18 get the vaccination to that individual.

19 For those that are in congregate
20 housing, some of them have already been
21 getting vaccinations through some of the
22 local pharmacies, others have not.

23 So we are just starting so sort
24 through that group because obviously they
25 just came online and just became eligible,

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 but we are finding there are resources out
3 there that may be able to assist us in
4 making sure that that population is getting
5 their vaccinations.

6 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Okay. Good
7 to hear. I would hope that we keep them in
8 the forefront of our mind.

9 I also received -- someone
10 reached out to my office, this person is
11 under the age of 65 but they have several
12 underlying conditions. Any time he goes to
13 sign up for a vaccination because of his age
14 he is restricted from signing up, but he has
15 these underlying conditions.

16 I'm just trying to figure out how
17 has this been working for -- because there
18 are many people with underlying conditions
19 and would be -- that would enable them to
20 get the vaccination. I'm trying to
21 understand how that is happening that
22 there's nothing to check when someone is
23 signing up for an vaccination.

24 MR. GIULIANO: At this time there
25 is no eligible category for someone with

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 conditions like that that we'll use that
3 universal umbrella of immune compromised for
4 some reason. It isn't a drop down, it isn't
5 a category, and it isn't something that we
6 are prioritizing, we have the ability to do
7 as a priority group. We are waiting for
8 some guidance to come down on that. Until
9 it does, and until the state system opens
10 that up as a category, that's not a
11 population we are authorized, as much as we
12 want to work with them, we can't do that
13 just yet.

14 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: I hope once
15 again that's one of the things that we can
16 obviously push for the governor to take an
17 active roll in.

18 I know that in some places, New
19 Jersey, for instance, there were locations
20 where there are hot lines manned by
21 volunteers, I think young adults, mostly
22 college kids, who take calls and help the
23 elderly to secure vaccine appointments.

24 I was wondering if that's
25 something that we consider doing in Nassau

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 County; if not, maybe that would be
3 something that is beneficial especially to
4 those that are having a difficult time
5 navigating the internet.

6 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: Well, what we
7 discussed, and I will say again, we did
8 redirect some of our staff to get trained so
9 they can handle the influx of the calls.

10 The purpose of that, the plan,
11 initially, was to serve our seniors, and to
12 operate just as you say, would be our staff
13 doing it, not young volunteers, that's a
14 great idea, but we were taking our staff
15 from our departments, having them trained
16 and establishing a senior call-in center
17 strictly for seniors to enable us to
18 preregister them. That was our plan.

19 Of course we sort of halted that
20 because we are unable to vaccinate seniors.

21 What I can say, taking from some
22 of the comments here is that we consider
23 enabling our additional staff that we
24 devoted to the call center to continue to
25 assist seniors, even though we are not

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 authorized by state to vaccinate them, to
3 maybe give them more direction, help them
4 along a little bit better and we will take
5 that into consideration. It's so clear to
6 us as well as all of you that our seniors
7 have been left out there without a lot of
8 help.

9 We still have our Office for the
10 Aging that is still assisting us on a daily
11 basis, but specific to this issue and
12 specific to vaccination, we will take
13 another look there to see what else we can
14 do, but we're cognizant of not sending
15 people on a wild goose chase.

16 We want to be able to give them
17 real information that results in something
18 tangible which, in this case, would be a
19 vaccine or a vaccination appointment at
20 least that's close by that makes sense for
21 that particular senior.

22 That's the challenge for us. But
23 we will take another look at what we're
24 doing there and how else we can help and
25 what more we can do.

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2 That was our whole intention from
3 the very beginning when we redirected the
4 staff and get them trained to be able to
5 help with the calls so we will take another
6 look.

7 MR. GIULIANO: And if I can add
8 to that, if I may, in doing that this has
9 become a substantial and serious issue for
10 the seniors. What little we can do we are
11 doing, when we built this database to give
12 people reminders for their second calls.

13 As part of the database, they are
14 now able to communicate with those who can
15 or a family member that can. We have an
16 email box that is now set up that we take
17 emails of all sorts of problems. What we
18 can do for them, and what we've instructed
19 our, what we call INR staff and our call
20 enter staff to do, we at least direct them
21 to where the links are again for many of
22 them, or another family member will assist
23 them where there are links for them to try
24 to sign up albeit it can't be with us but
25 with other locations in the surrounding

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 communities that are for seniors and there
3 is a seniors call-in number, it's a state
4 number. We give it out to everyone who asks
5 that of us or emails to us.

6 We have people that actually go
7 through the email box every single day and
8 clear it out and try to answer as many
9 questions as possible. It's the least we
10 can do and it's at this point the most we're
11 able to do for them.

12 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Thank you.
13 And I know there are many many young people
14 across this county who want to help and if
15 it could be something that people who really
16 want to help can be brought together to make
17 some kind of an effort, any amount of help
18 would be great for those seniors because,
19 like you said, there's so many people, so
20 many.

21 Sometimes it's just to hear an
22 answer, to hear a voice, to be able to know
23 that somebody is working for you because
24 that's also a very difficult thing when
25 people call my office and they say I cannot

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 get to speak to a person. I'm so frustrated
3 and I'm at my wit's end. People are so
4 upset. We've heard it from everyone. It's
5 the same thing across the board, across this
6 whole county.

7 Then, as each one has expanded to
8 the next group, it's just making it more and
9 more difficult. But thank you.

10 One thing that struck me as soon
11 as this all started that could not -- a
12 couple could not sign up together. Curious
13 why that is. I had several people call my
14 office and say, I made an appointment and my
15 wife's appointment is three weeks from now.
16 We're at Jones Beach and three weeks later
17 and a week later because the other one and
18 three weeks after that.

19 I can't understand how we can't
20 get these senior couples who need to go and
21 being together would be a tremendous benefit
22 and it's just not good for them to be out
23 numerous times, so I'm just wondering why we
24 could not do that when we haven't been able
25 to do so since.

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2 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: It certainly
3 makes sense and it's the most efficient way
4 and more convenient obviously for those
5 seniors to come together to the site as a
6 couple.

7 If we're authorized to vaccinate
8 more seniors, that's something that we will
9 do because it doesn't make sense to do it
10 any other way. As long as they are both
11 eligible, it's the most efficient way and a
12 convenience for the seniors.

13 If we get to that point where we
14 are able to get more vaccine and authorized
15 to vaccinate seniors, we can make that
16 happen. That makes perfect sense.

17 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: That would
18 be great. Thank you.

19 One other question. In my
20 district, it seems all along the South
21 Shore, it's very difficult, and I know
22 Massapequa Park is part of my district, we
23 were in the yellow zone there, worked their
24 way out, and I know all along the south
25 shore, Freeport was in a difficult position

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 as well, but it doesn't seem that the south
3 shore pretty much across the board that
4 there are sites for vaccinations and that
5 would be an ideal place to shoot for, it's a
6 large population, very simple up and down,
7 Merrick Road, Sunrise Highway.

8 I'm just curious, is that
9 something that's been thought about? I'm
10 curious, I know that there were a couple of
11 sites, one of the Northwell and Massapequa,
12 that one was not being used, but I think one
13 in Syosset -- I can't find it right now, but
14 anyway I'm just curious about that. Is that
15 something that we can see possibly?

16 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: I don't know.
17 I know obviously as Dr. Larry said earlier,
18 we had a plan and the college was part of
19 that plan and Yes We Can Center was part of
20 that plan.

21 I don't know that we envisioned
22 where we are right now and our ability to
23 set up additional pods.

24 I know that we are constantly
25 reevaluating that, and we will take a look

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 at what is the best location for us to pool
3 our resources so we can get to the greatest
4 number of people.

5 So the south shore is -- I hear
6 you, I guess the nearest site to them would
7 be at the college. But we can talk about
8 that with Dr. Larry and the whole team as we
9 go forward on whether or not we can and will
10 be opening up pods and where are they and
11 what makes the best sense for all our
12 residents.

13 MR. GIULIANO: Right. I think
14 that we've actually considered things like
15 that. We are cognizant that we're a county,
16 and their size-ability to the county.

17 I think right now we're limited
18 by the fact that the vaccine dosage is only
19 so much that we are running two pods right
20 now and we're running through all of our
21 vaccine right now. We have to double down
22 that as well as the staffing it takes to
23 open up another pod with now what is limited
24 vaccine.

25 I think what we are waiting for

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 the greater availability of vaccine to do
3 more things that we would like to do.

4 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Thank you
5 and thank you for answering the questions.
6 I would just like to ask the County
7 Executive to just please push the governor
8 to help us here in Nassau County and I know
9 that you have a very good relationship with
10 our governor and to utilize that would be
11 fantastic for all the residents in Nassau
12 County. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Legislator
14 DeRiggi-Whitton, then Legislators Birnbaum
15 and Rhoads.

16 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Yes,
17 thank you. I have to think it's actually
18 even further up from the state. It seems
19 like the federal government didn't really
20 have a plan in place and now they're trying
21 to catch up.

22 I do think New York has really
23 been pushing to try and get as many as we
24 can. I believe that County Executive Curran
25 is aware of the lack.

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2 I just did quick math. So if we
3 relied on what we're getting now, just what
4 the county is doing, it would take almost
5 eight years to get our residents vaccinated.
6 If you go back and look at the polio vaccine
7 in 1955, there is no comparison. They were
8 ahead of us in the game.

9 I understand it's a numbers
10 formula situation and I hope if Johnson and
11 Johnson comes out, we don't have the same
12 issues, that maybe we can go to the senior
13 centers and homeless shelters and go to all
14 the places that we have to go to.

15 I'm hoping that this is going to
16 happen in the next four weeks. I just have,
17 planning ahead, because we were all hit by
18 surprise with the pandemic, and no one had
19 testing, no one had -- hand sanitizer,
20 everything, went out to the door quick.

21 How are we with our supply of
22 syringes; do you know? Especially those
23 that might accommodate the extra dose?

24 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: I don't think
25 that that's an issue for us.

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2 We have been procuring. We are
3 limited in how much we can procure. I mean,
4 when you're seeing the paper work come
5 through, we're like, why are we doing it
6 this way? I ask the question, why are we
7 not buying in greater bulk?

8 We are prohibited in doing that
9 from the vendors. So they are controlling
10 how much goes out. But we haven't had any
11 issue in procuring and getting it and
12 getting it delivered to us in plenty of time
13 so that we have a sufficient amount of
14 supply for the vaccine.

15 As we get more vaccine, obviously
16 the syringes have to come with it. We are
17 watching that very closely.

18 While we are unable to buy in the
19 biggest bulk we would like to, so far we
20 have not had any issue with it.

21 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: So
22 far meaning the numbers that we are
23 dispensing as of today?

24 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: Yes.

25 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: If

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 Johnson and Johnson comes out, I really
3 think we are going to be given hopefully a
4 good amount. Are we going to be prepared
5 for that? Do we get the syringes based on
6 the doses we're given or is it a completely
7 separate process?

8 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: We do get
9 syringes with the doses, but we have secured
10 additional syringes because, as
11 Dr. Eisenstein, explained discovered that
12 with a smaller syringe, that we could get an
13 extra dose out of it. So we have a
14 sufficient amount of supply of syringes
15 because we have been buying additional to
16 what we've been given.

17 MR. GIULIANO: I will add to
18 that. Our planning people look at that
19 every day. It's not just putting needles in
20 arms which is the most important thing right
21 now, it's knowing that they have all the
22 things they need to do that.

23 So there is someone looking at
24 supplies on an every day basis and they're
25 taking inventory on an everyday basis and

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 we're able to get those when we see that we
3 need another supply of something. We are
4 staying ahead of it, at least a week ahead
5 of it if not more.

6 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I
7 hope so because we don't want to get all the
8 vaccine all of a sudden and not have the
9 syringes. That will frustrate people
10 further.

11 Also, I went into Walgreens
12 yesterday. The manager actually asked me,
13 assistant manager, if I knew what was going
14 on with the pharmacies. He didn't even know
15 what was going on. He said the website had
16 crashed because it was out on social media
17 that Walgreens -- again, we are living in an
18 age where communication and technology
19 should hopefully come in in a better way
20 than it has so far in my opinion.

21 I just think we really have to be
22 more organized with the information just to
23 stop the chaos that people are feeling.

24 I know it's not Nassau County
25 Board of Health that's responsible, but I

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 wish we had a better plan for disseminating
3 the information.

4 My final question is, right now
5 if I wanted to make an appointment in the
6 Bronx, would I be turned away?

7 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: I'm sorry. I
8 don't know the answer to that question.

9 MR. GIULIANO: I don't know the
10 answer specifically either.

11 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: So
12 New York, five boroughs, are banning Nassau
13 County residents as of right now. Is it
14 state run sites or is it all of them?

15 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: I'm sorry. I
16 don't have that information for you.

17 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: I believe
18 it's the state run sites are open to anyone.
19 It's just the city sites when you use the
20 portal stops it actually stops you from
21 making an appointment unless you live in the
22 city or work in the city.

23 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:
24 Because I do know that someone made an
25 appointment in the Bronx recently and also

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 Binghamton, I have residents also going up
3 to Binghamton.

4 Again, I'm hoping when the
5 supplies come in and we're prepared with the
6 syringes, hopefully the locations will have
7 a big turning point at that time. Thank you
8 again.

9 MR. GIULIANO: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Legislator
11 Birnbaum on remote.

12 LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Yes. Hi.
13 Can you hear me?

14 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Yes.

15 LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Thank you
16 for answering all these questions. I know
17 it's taking quite a while and many of mine
18 have been answered already.

19 I'm just wondering, is it
20 possible to supply some kind of estimation
21 for when our Nassau County sites will be
22 getting to the senior population based on
23 all of the other groups that are before
24 them?

25 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: We have been

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 barred by the state from vaccinating
3 seniors. This has been a bone of contention
4 for us since that happened. We have been
5 pushing back and asking for authorization to
6 vaccinate our seniors.

7 So it's a daily request that we
8 make. But we are bound by what the state
9 mandates tell us and who we should
10 prioritize week to week.

11 Unfortunately, to date, after
12 last week, we don't have any further
13 authorization to vaccinate our seniors. So
14 it's not a matter of when we will get to
15 them but when they allow us to.

16 We are capable of vaccinating our
17 seniors. We have the infrastructure in
18 place to enable us to be able to do that,
19 but we are not authorized to vaccinate our
20 seniors.

21 LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: I
22 understand that, but I'm just saying, given
23 the populations that you have to vaccinate
24 first, have been able to calculate the
25 amount of people that go before the seniors;

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 if there were no other changes, no other
3 groups added?

4 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: We still would
5 have to be authorized by the state to allow
6 us to vaccinate the seniors. But I would
7 imagine if all else was exhausted, that
8 authorization would come through.

9 I don't know the answer to that
10 question because there are many many
11 eligible residents at this point that we are
12 unable to get to. So I don't have an answer
13 to your question.

14 We have not made that calculation
15 because it's so speculative. It depends on
16 many many factors, supply being one,
17 eligibility, and amount of people in each
18 category. I'm sorry, I don't have a better
19 answer for you.

20 LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Okay. My
21 second question has to do with Northwell
22 Health. They are our partner. You work
23 with them in creating the different pods,
24 correct?

25 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: They are the --

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 go ahead, I'm sorry.

3 LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: If you work
4 with Northwell Health in selecting areas
5 where we can create the pod and they have
6 their own limited amount of places, I
7 believe they only have three Northwell
8 Health facilities that I've seen, Lake
9 Success, Hewlett and Syosset, is it possible
10 to implore them to open up more sites where
11 they could be inoculating people?

12 MR. GIULIANO: Northwell makes
13 those decisions for themselves. They are
14 the hospital system but they are also the
15 hub, and we get a supply of vaccine from
16 them.

17 While we have partnered with them
18 in terms of our earlier vaccination pods and
19 they have supplied some personnel to help
20 us, as they open up more pods, they are
21 using their personnel and there's less and
22 less supply of their employees to us as with
23 us and we are pretty much standing up our
24 vaccination clinics right now with health
25 department employees and employees of other

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 agencies of this county and members of the
3 MRC, almost exclusively at this point, and
4 so -- those are conversations I know that
5 Dr. Eisenstein does have with Northwell and
6 the Northwell hub and we will -- I will take
7 this back to him.

8 I do believe he is engaged in
9 those kinds of conversations looking to try
10 to stand up more pods to do the larger
11 populations to do more individuals.

12 But at this point this is where
13 we stand, what we are able to do as an
14 eligible entity because we do take our
15 direction from the state.

16 LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Right. But
17 I'm just wondering because we are their
18 partners, they are the ones that are
19 assisting the county, why we can't work with
20 them to set up more sites throughout Nassau
21 County since they are actually the largest
22 healthcare system in the state and they're
23 based right here in Nassau County. To me, I
24 just expect more from them.

25 I would also ask for more COVID

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 test sites. We do have to do the
3 vaccinations but we also have to be
4 cognizant of the fact that there are many
5 people still in need of testing sites and
6 instead of shutting testing sites, there was
7 one up here on Community Drive in Great
8 Neck, they should be keeping them open and
9 having additional testing sites at the same
10 time.

11 My final question is also in
12 lines of what a former colleague was saying
13 about having South Shore sites. I would
14 considering argue that we would need some
15 northwestern sites in Nassau County because
16 there are senior citizens who live in this
17 area and they can't travel a half hour, 45
18 minutes, to go to a local site.

19 I agree with the fact that
20 husbands and wives should be able to
21 schedule together. It's really unfortunate
22 that they have to make two trips, where ever
23 they get the appointment, one is in one
24 location and one is in another, and that's
25 for the lucky ones.

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2 But I think going forward I think
3 we should have a system in place where the
4 seniors who can't make an appointment on
5 their computer that actually call and you
6 can work with husband and wives to schedule
7 at the same time. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Legislator
9 Ford has a question and then Legislator
10 Rhoads.

11 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you very
12 much. I will be rather brief. I just want
13 to echo the sentiments of my fellow
14 legislators in regards to our seniors and
15 especially with the pods.

16 I'm just curious, when you reach
17 up to the governor, especially in regard to
18 our seniors, the vaccination distribution,
19 are all of the commissioners of health in
20 agreement that the seniors should be the
21 first ones to be vaccinated or do we just
22 leave it or you just wait to see what the
23 governor has to say, or do our commissioners
24 agree with the governor to just keep opening
25 up the eligibility slots?

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 MR. GIULIANO: I do know that on
3 the calls that Dr. Eisenstein is on, with
4 respect to the New York State Association of
5 County Health Officials, all the health
6 officials and all the health directors, they
7 do each the sentiment to continue to have
8 vaccine for seniors and how important it is
9 for seniors as a vulnerable population.

10 I do know that the NYCHO [sic],
11 the acronym for the organization has reached
12 out, to echo that view, and so there is a
13 lot of agreement with trying to get a way to
14 work, work its way to the senior population.
15 That is something that consistently comes up
16 on those calls.

17 LEGISLATOR FORD: Is it possible
18 then to maybe perhaps ask our commissioners
19 of health as well as our various county
20 executives to then jointly write a letter to
21 the governor saying that this should not be
22 political, that we should defer to the
23 medical experts, the ones that know best?
24 In my mind, considering the problems that
25 we've had with our nursing homes, and now,

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 once again, I find that seniors, all of our
3 seniors are at greater risk.

4 My heart breaks for them because
5 I get calls. We get emails from people who
6 are desperate. A lot of these people are
7 elderly women that have nobody and alone, so
8 I really urge you, and I'm going to ask my
9 Legislators to join us and maybe we should
10 write a letter, a stern letter supporting
11 our medical directors and staying it's time
12 we defer to your experience and your
13 opinions in regard to vaccinating our
14 seniors.

15 I'm very happy that that's going
16 to be reconsidered, that hotline for our
17 seniors. I think it's very important that
18 we keep lines of communication open
19 especially for our most vulnerable, and what
20 we can do is, even for the seniors, even
21 though we cannot help them register for
22 their vaccinations, at least we can start a
23 registry of who is looking to be vaccinated,
24 and who may have some issues at home.

25 So this could be a database that

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 we can use and then -- I had offered that I
3 would be happy to volunteer at a later date
4 and to be able to reach back out to the
5 seniors to make sure to find out, did they
6 get their vaccinations, are they still
7 having problems?

8 It's just to make sure that these
9 people do not feel that they have been
10 kicked to the curb and totally left in the
11 dark on everything.

12 I think sometimes with their
13 loneliness, especially with this winter
14 being isolated, to be able to get some
15 friendly calls or calls of concern from
16 different people. I think that would go a
17 long way, especially for their mental
18 health.

19 In regard to the pods, I too am
20 very angry that are no pods. I'm down on
21 the South Shore. The city of Long Beach is
22 a very diverse population. I know that the
23 closest county pod is Nassau County
24 Community College. But if memory serves me
25 correctly, there's no direct line that goes,

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 a bus line that goes from Long Beach, from
3 the barrier island to Nassau Community
4 College.

5 I would urge you that as we open
6 up more pods, I agree with Legislator
7 Birnbaum, let's reach out to Northwell, we
8 can go to Mt. Sinai, let's start working
9 with our medical facilities in expanding the
10 number of pods especially when more and more
11 vaccines are coming. Because I do think
12 that we're not serving all of our
13 populations as well as we can be.

14 But I also want to say, thank you
15 for all the fine jobs you are doing. I
16 really appreciate all the efforts.

17 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Legislator
18 McKevitt.

19 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Yes. I
20 just have one issue which, again, you
21 probably do not know the answer no but ask
22 for your advocacy on. I have a parent with
23 multiple sclerosis, obviously very very
24 concerned about it, with children going to
25 school, so if you know anything you're aware

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 of, advocate the fact that multiple
3 sclerosis patients be on the list, get those
4 vaccines sooner rather than later.

5 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: We actually
6 had another similar comment, individual with
7 asthma and Diabetes Type II, seeking to get
8 an appointment, specific assistance with
9 people who have underlying conditions,
10 immune compromised, to advance up the
11 priority list, are you aware of that? Is
12 there anything specific for someone who has
13 a condition like that?

14 MS. ROSE-LOUDER: There isn't at
15 this time. However, I think Dr. Larry
16 Eisenstein did tell us this morning it is
17 something that they repeatedly bring up in
18 their calls with the Governor's Office with
19 the state about getting some guidance for
20 this population.

21 Obviously these are people that
22 are very vulnerable at risk and we are
23 concerned about them.

24 So while they appear to be
25 eligible, we haven't gotten any guidance on

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 how to handle this population. I know that
3 Dr. Eisenstein is working on that and as
4 soon as we know, he will be making that
5 announcement and let all of you know, you
6 probably will know before I know because I
7 know he speaks to you all every week, so he
8 will let you know and all our residents know
9 that they are now eligible and we'll start
10 working on getting them to a pod.

11 CHAIRMAN NICOLELLO: Thank you.
12 Legislator Rhoads.

13 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Just a quick
14 follow-up questions and lot of what I was
15 going to ask I know has been covered by
16 other legislators.

17 It sounds as though -- obviously
18 there is clearly a distribution problem and
19 it seems as though the state has been coming
20 out very slowly with solutions to some of
21 the known problems that have been brought to
22 their attention by the county. Again,
23 talking about the preexisting conditions,
24 this is a guidance issued -- rather, this is
25 a directive issued by the state that

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 individuals with preexisting health
3 conditions were eligible to receive the
4 vaccine, yet, it's been over a month and no
5 guidance has come down from the state.
6 That's not the county's fault, that's the
7 governor's fault. No one can vaccinate
8 those individuals.

9 So many of the letters we have
10 here and comments that we have here is
11 frustration from those residents that are
12 eligible for the vaccine but can't seem to
13 sign up for it anywhere because there's been
14 no guidance issued from the state. I wish
15 the governor would spend a little less time
16 on book deals and Emmy award celebrations
17 and more time on trying to figure out some
18 of these solution.

19 But we have a role to play in
20 this process as well. We were speaking
21 about the list potentially for seniors that
22 want to get the vaccine rather than them
23 continuously having them try to get onto the
24 website to make appointments, a list for
25 seniors to say they want a vaccine and be

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 contacted when an appointment is available.
3 That might not be a bad idea for it to be
4 done for all eligible groups, it might be a
5 easier way and it might be a way to solve
6 some of the frustration if people can get
7 confirmation that they're on the list and
8 when vaccines become available for their
9 particular group, they will be contacted
10 with an appointment.

11 Is that something that can be
12 brought up to the state? I know all of
13 these scheduling for these appointments is
14 controlled by the state website.

15 MR. GIULIANO: I will attempt to
16 answer that even with a better answer, yes,
17 that can be brought up to the state but the
18 county has taken, in working with IT and
19 authorization from county officials, we took
20 it upon ourselves, understanding that there
21 have been problems with the CDMS system,
22 that's at clinical data management system
23 from the state, with all these problems and
24 all the limitations that have happened with
25 it, we endeavored an approach to the IT

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 department to create basically what is our
3 own system.

4 This started off with first an
5 appointment system for second doses and we
6 are now, when I say "we," IT, is building a
7 system for all first dose appointments and
8 what is the endeavor of the administration
9 and the health department is to create a
10 pre-registration list of all these people
11 and all these categories so we know who they
12 are and where they are and know how to reach
13 them. This is what we are attempting to do
14 right now.

15 That platform is being built
16 right now because we do want to know who
17 they are and where they are, that way at a
18 moment's notice, when we are ready or when
19 we get the vaccine or when we get the
20 authorization, we can go directly out to
21 them, contact them, and have that kind of
22 immediate interaction with them. So we've
23 undertaken ourselves to do, yes.

24 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Do we have
25 any ideas when that potentially might be

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 online? Because the issues are obviously
3 now. It's wonderful that the county is
4 being proactive in trying to create that
5 database, but obviously we have 18 million
6 people statewide is our total population,
7 with the guidance issued by the governor,
8 probably 13 or 14 million of which are all
9 eligible to receive the vaccine all trying
10 to get a limited number of appointments.

11 Including our own residents, that
12 frustration is there now. Those problems
13 are there now, that fear is there now. So
14 the sooner we can get that online the
15 better.

16 When do you think that we'll be
17 able to put that out to our residents as a
18 way for them to be able to get themselves on
19 a list?

20 MR. GIULIANO: I know that they
21 are in the middle of beta testing that
22 system.

23 I think the answer is we are
24 hopeful that it's shortly. I can't give you
25 an exact date but it's something that weeks

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 ago that we took to undertake ourselves.
3 But they had to build an appointment system
4 first before they went there.

5 It's not just that it needs to be
6 a system that's then going to take all this
7 information ultimately, first dose, second
8 dose, all the system communicates within
9 itself, and then it's able to take that
10 information, all of that information, all of
11 these first doses and second doses has to go
12 into the state database system for
13 immunizations and we are in the process of
14 doing that third piece of it as well, so we
15 can force that information into the state
16 system and be completely off the state
17 registration system. So we're doing all of
18 this simultaneously.

19 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: It's
20 frustrating because the state has known for
21 ten months. We didn't know exactly when we
22 would be at this point as far as when the
23 vaccines were going to be rolled out, but we
24 knew at some point in time there was going
25 to be a vaccine distribution program. It's

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 just stunning that these problems wouldn't
3 have been anticipated that there would have
4 been a fix for those problems and really
5 it's local jurisdictions that are being left
6 to come up with solutions to problems they
7 didn't create and can't necessarily solve on
8 their own.

9 I understand the frustration from
10 the department. Taking that, we spoke about
11 Mayor DeBlasio restricting access to Nassau
12 County residents and residents from outside
13 of the city of New York to the city run
14 vaccination sites.

15 We have adversely impacted
16 communities too. Legislator Kennedy
17 mentioned that Freeport was a community that
18 was pretty hard hit by COVID.

19 The notion that New York City
20 should be treated differently because of
21 their density of population and because of
22 adversely impacted communities, we have
23 those adversely impacted communities of our
24 own. We have those adversely impacted
25 populations of our own. We have residents

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 that are in need as well.

3 This is more of a comment than it
4 is a question. Nassau County has seven
5 percent of the states population but when we
6 are receiving 2,800 doses of vaccine a week
7 which is what we received for the last two
8 weeks, despite the fact that we have seven
9 percent of the population, we are only
10 receiving about one percent of the vaccine.

11 Say what you want about Mayor
12 Deblasio, and I have plenty of negative
13 things to say about Mayor Deblasio,
14 including about this particular issue, but I
15 will say Mayor Deblasio is out there
16 fighting for the residents of New York City.

17 It's up to our County Executive
18 to stand up and fight for the residents of
19 Nassau County and right now I don't see
20 that.

21 While Mayor Deblasio is willing
22 to take on the governor, I don't see that
23 our County Executive Laura Curran has been
24 ready to stand up and take on the governor
25 on a regular basis to fight to get Nassau

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 County residents what they deserve. That is
3 a disservice to our residents that I hope
4 will be corrected by the administration.

5 I think that -- the fact that the
6 federal government now is going to be
7 sending directly -- it's my understanding
8 that the federal government now is going to
9 be sending vaccine directly to some of the
10 larger pharmacies as opposed to it coming to
11 the state, an acknowledgment that the
12 state's distribution plan has failed.

13 But instead of just talking about
14 failures, we need to be advocating for our
15 residents to be part of the solution, and I
16 hope the County Executive will be part of
17 that.

18 For example, there seems to be an
19 abundant supple of vaccine in other parts of
20 the state.

21 The notion that Nassau County
22 residents can sign on and make an
23 appointment in Rochester doesn't seem to
24 make much sense. If they have extra vaccine
25 in other parts of the state that are less

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 densely populated, why is that vaccine not
3 coming here to Nassau County, Suffolk
4 County, Long Island region where we have
5 such a large population.

6 But we really need to be doing
7 and, in my view, the administration needs to
8 be doing a better job.

9 I can call the Governor's Office
10 all day long. He's not taking my call. But
11 I'm pretty sure that the County Executive
12 might have the governor's cell phone number.
13 I'm pretty sure if she picked up the phone
14 and called him to talk about this issue and
15 to advocate on behalf of Nassau County
16 residents, that he would take that call.
17 Because he's taken that call on many other
18 issues over the course of the last three
19 years.

20 So we need our County Executive
21 to join us in the Legislature in advocating
22 our residents be treated fairly in making
23 sure we get our fair share of the state's
24 resources because it doesn't seem to be
25 happening now.

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2 But I appreciate your testimony
3 and appreciate the amazing work that the
4 health department has been doing in response
5 to this pandemic and in trying to make sense
6 out of a process which is flawed to say the
7 least.

8 MR. GIULIANO: I will say this in
9 a very short response just to point some
10 things out.

11 We are told from the state that
12 the doses, that the vaccines that are handed
13 down, or apportioned by population of the
14 locality.

15 I don't know that New York City
16 is in that matrix. I know New York City
17 gets their doses directly from the CDC. We
18 also know that New York City is funded
19 directly by the CDC unlike other counties.
20 So there are those kinds of things that are
21 built in that I thought would be important
22 to point out to the Legislature.

23 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Yes. They
24 get their doses directly from the CDC, but
25 their doses are counted towards the state's

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21

2 allotment.

3 So when the state is saying it
4 receives 250 to 300,000 vaccine that
5 includes what's going to New York City, and
6 if it's being apportioned by percentage, and
7 New York City's population is not being
8 considered in that apportionment, that's
9 what the issue is.

10 Again, our residents are being
11 disadvantaged adversely by that.

12 The reality is, we have seven
13 percent of the population. We are getting
14 only one percent of the vaccine that's being
15 received by the state. That's an inequity
16 that needs to be corrected and where it
17 seems that supply is the issue, look, we can
18 put a vaccination site on every street
19 corner, if you don't have the vaccine to
20 hand out, it's not going to matter.

21 We need to get our hands on more
22 vaccine and if there's more vaccine that's
23 out there that we should be receiving as a
24 county, we should be standing up for our
25 residents. Everybody should have an equal

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2 playing field to play on.

3 If New York City is getting more
4 vaccine per capita than the Nassau County
5 residents and is also restricting Nassau
6 County residents from being able to receive
7 that vaccine, either that needs to change,
8 or we need to be able to put the same
9 restrictions in place to protect our Nassau
10 County residents.

11 Everybody should be playing by
12 the same rules. In my opinion there should
13 be no restrictions. Whoever can sign on and
14 whoever can get the vaccine can make an
15 appointment and go get the vaccine.

16 But there needs to be a level
17 playing field and everybody has to be
18 playing by the same rules. That's what's
19 fair, but thank you I appreciate it.

20 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Thank you.
21 Any other Legislators have any comments or
22 questions.

23 (No verbal response.)

24 I thank you so much for being
25 here this morning and for answering all our

1 COVID Vaccination Hearing/2-4-21
2 questions. Again, thank you for all you are
3 doing and we couldn't be more proud of our
4 Nassau County Health Department. So thank
5 you.

6 Just so everybody is aware,
7 committees will start at 1:30.

8 (Whereupon, the Hearing on the
9 Covid-19 Vaccination Process adjourned at
10 12:27 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, FRANK GRAY, a Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of New York, do hereby stated:

THAT I attended at the time and place above mentioned and took stenographic record of the proceedings in the above-entitled matter;

THAT the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate transcript of the same and the whole thereof, according to the best of my ability and belief.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 22nd day of February, 2021.

FRANK GRAY