



January 28, 2021

Mr. Mark Elam, Esq.
DHEC Chairman
DHEC Headquarters, Room 3420
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Chairman Elam,

We write to you today to express our shared concerns regarding the distribution of vaccines to frontline state partners who are responsible for getting “shots in arms”, in a timely fashion. We have been informed that South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control leadership is currently considering several methodologies for distribution of vaccines as they become available. We applaud state leadership for considering multiple models and hope a decision will be made soon, as it has been made clear that demand for vaccines by our citizens will greatly outpace our supply for at least some time into the future.

We sincerely request the methodology for distribution consider factors such as, but not limited to, elderly populations, rural communities, and minority populations that data has shown have been disproportionately affected by this pandemic. We also hope the policy and process for distribution will be made available to local governments, so we can educate and ensure our citizens that a priority based, and data-driven approach has been followed. Most folks understand that we currently have less vaccine than what is needed, however, we believe a priority based, equitable, and transparent process will go a long way toward calming anxiety across our state, regarding access to vaccines.

We know there has been concern statewide regarding our medical communities' ability to vaccinate residents quickly and effectively. Please know that our local medical community, in partnership with our local governments and other stakeholders are prepared to vaccinate our residents as quickly and safely as possible. On Thursday, January 21, 2021, Beaufort Memorial Hospital held a mass vaccination event at the Beaufort High School stadium. This event allowed 1,066 people to obtain their first vaccine shot. The event was well coordinated using our Sheriff's department staff, County department staff, Beaufort Memorial staff, and school staff to ensure that the day went smoothly. In fact, if Beaufort Memorial had additional doses of the vaccine, they could have inoculated about 1,000 more people in the time frame that was set up for this event. Beaufort Memorial Hospital conducts vaccine clinics in both of their locations for 1st and 2nd doses Monday-Friday but must limit the number of appointments to 400 per day because of the lack of supply of vaccines, with more vaccine, the clinics could increase that number and operate 7 days per week. Additionally, Hilton Head Hospital as of January 23rd, according to the data on DHEC's website is the #1 hospital in the state for the combined utilization rate of first and second doses.

Several organizations are assisting in the registration of individuals to get into the system for their first vaccination, due to the lack of computers or email addresses for this population. Additional events are planned around Beaufort County that will be able to vaccinate large numbers of our most vulnerable population and we are also working with our counterparts in Jasper county to assist in the vaccinations of their vulnerable population.

As you can see our county is preparing its citizens for vaccinations when their group is designated. Our hospitals have the plans in place to vaccinate large numbers of people and just need the vaccine to carry out those plans and get “shots in arms”. We stand ready to take on this herculean task but request your assistance in ensuring that we are receiving the appropriate number of doses from the Federal Government, and that SCDHEC is distributing them in a timely and equitable way. Again, thank you for your leadership in these tumultuous and unprecedented times. We look forward to overcoming this pandemic and working with you in the future to continue making the great state of South Carolina a remarkable place to live, work, and visit.

In Service,


Joseph Passiment, Chairman
Beaufort County Council


Stephen Murray, Mayor
City of Beaufort


Lisa Sulka, Mayor
Town of Bluffton


Harry Williams, Mayor
Town of Hardeeville


John McCann, Mayor
Town of Hilton Head Island


Joe DeVito, Mayor
Town of Port Royal


Colin Moore, Mayor
Town of Yemassee

CC: Honorable Henry McMaster, Governor
Beaufort County Legislative Delegation
DHEC Board of Directors