



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Ralph S. Northam
Governor

April 8, 2021

Stuart Henochowicz, MD MBA FACP
Governor, American College of Physicians, Virginia Chapter
25 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001-7401

Dear Dr. Henochowicz:

Thank you for your letter and for your invaluable insight on the role that community-based primary care physicians play in the Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccination response. We look forward to continued collaboration with the American College of Physicians and other partners to support these healthcare providers, who are working directly on the frontlines of the largest public vaccination campaign in history.

Primary care physicians and their staff are classified as "healthcare personnel" under the [VDH COVID-19 Vaccine Phase 1a](#), which opened up to eligible Virginians in December 2020. It is critical that the Commonwealth vaccinate this population as quickly as possible in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and the risk of serious illness for both providers and their patients. Anyone in this group who has not yet been scheduled for an appointment should ensure that they have pre-registered and updated their information by visiting vaccinate.virginia.gov or by calling 877-VAX-IN-VA. They may also contact their [local health department](#) directly and should receive immediate priority for an appointment.

We encourage coordination between primary care physicians and vaccine providers as an important strategy for supporting patients after they are vaccinated. We require vaccinators to record data on doses administered in the Virginia Immunization Information System (VIIS), which is available to primary care practices. Most should already have access, but for those that do not, it may be granted through a routine application process. We can also work to develop more detailed guidance for community vaccinators on care coordination, with language advising patients to check in with their primary care physician after they receive their vaccine.

Virginia's vaccine allocation strategy aims to reach as many people as possible in a timely, equitable, and efficient manner and ensure that each local community has adequate overall access to vaccines. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has already on-boarded more than 600 physician practices and community health centers across the Commonwealth as vaccine providers, and local health districts are allocating to new providers every week. We

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expect that this will only continue to grow in the coming weeks as the Commonwealth's federal allocation of doses increases. Providers interested in administering COVID-19 vaccine should fill out the [Provider Intent Form](#), which is located on the [VDH COVID-19 Vaccination Response](#) page. VDH has also developed an [FAQ](#) page related to the provider intent form that you may find helpful.

Although we have a long road ahead of us, I am confident that we will reach our goal of safely and equitably achieving herd immunity in our population. We are already seeing incredible success, with approximately 1 in 3 adults in Virginia having received at least one dose of a vaccine. This is due in large part to the efforts of our primary care physicians, who have been serving COVID-19 patients, raising awareness about vaccination, and administering doses in communities across the Commonwealth. Thank you again for your input, and I look forward to our continued partnership in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph S. Northam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ralph S. Northam