



VIKKI GOODWIN



STATE REPRESENTATIVE • DISTRICT 47

January 6, 2021

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711-2428

Doctor John Hellerstedt, Commissioner
Texas Department of State Health Services
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, TX 78756-3199

Delivered electronically

Dear Governor Abbott and Doctor Hellerstedt:

After nearly a year of the physical threat, social dislocation and economic hardship wrought by COVID-19, the arrival of several vaccines now suggests a light at the end of the tunnel. Yet to judge by the calls and messages to my office, what should be a cause for celebration has instead become a source of growing confusion and frustration. Many are unclear about who can get vaccinated and do not understand how to participate in the process. Furthermore, it is not always clear that the policies that are in place are the ones being implemented: in some cases blind luck or personal connections are supplanting the priorities your offices have established. Unfortunately, when people contact my office with legitimate questions and concerns about these issues, I do not know what to tell them because the State's plan conflicts with what people are actually experiencing across the state. The dearth of reliable public information leads to skepticism over the government's ability to look out for the public health. This sort of suspicion is not what any of us want.

Texans are counting on your leadership to organize an effective and efficient vaccine rollout. To that end I am making four requests, each informed by the concerns that have been expressed by my constituents.

First, please prioritize vaccination for those whose occupations require them to interact with people outside of their household. Those who risk COVID infection by going to work should receive the vaccine before others who are fortunate enough to hold jobs that they can perform safely from home. This category would include, but not be limited to:

- teachers, school employees and day care workers whose work with our children is indispensable;
- grocery store employees who are and have been risking their own lives so that we can have food on our tables; and
- food service workers who regularly interact with unmasked patrons dining at their establishments.

Second, a cursory glance at my local map of vaccination locations suggests that providers are much less concentrated in areas that have a higher percentage of minority residents. In light of the fact that Black and Latino populations have suffered disproportionately from COVID-19, I have concerns about this pattern being replicated statewide. I ask that you take special care to distribute opportunities for

vaccination widely and with an eye toward making them equally available to all Texans regardless of racial or ethnic background.

Third, state legislators need to receive frequent and regular updates on the vaccination distribution plan and its implementation so that we can relay accurate information and amplify plans to our constituents. For the Legislature to be an effective partner to the governor's office in this effort, its members need accurate and timely information.

Fourth and finally, the information that we are provided needs to match what is actually happening across the state, and state plans need to be immediately revised if they are not feasible in actuality. After the state announced the beginning of Phase 1B vaccinations last week, for example, many of my constituents reported that providers were dispensing vaccines only in accordance with Phase 1A. Public health depends on everyday Texans being able to act on the basis with the information that they are provided by the state. Please institute feedback mechanisms to ensure that vaccination priorities are being enacted, and share the results of these inquiries with the Legislature.

The slow pace of vaccination means more people will contract COVID-19, which will continue to overwhelm our hospitals and delay economic recovery. The vaccines cannot be rolled out quickly and effectively unless Texans have confidence in the information they receive from DSHS, the governor, and their representatives. Please help us work with you to ensure that Texans are vaccinated efficiently and safely.

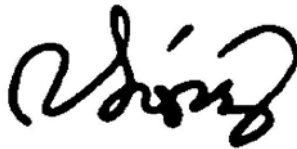
Sincerely,



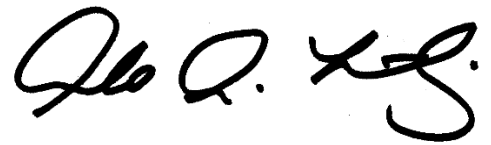
Vikki Goodwin
State Representative, District 47



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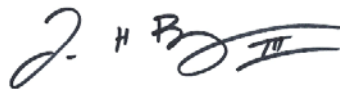
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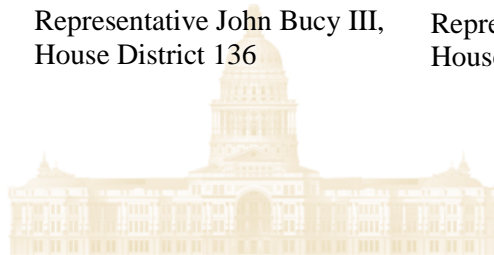
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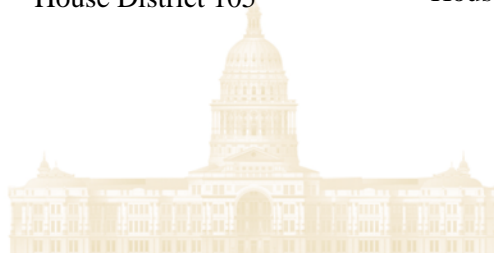
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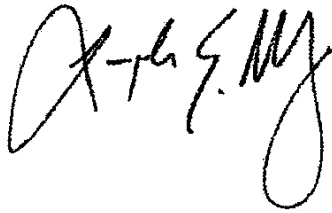
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