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Gov. Wolf and COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force Announce Targeted Vaccination Strategies

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Commitment to Appointments for Seniors, Support of Frontline Workers, A Plan for a Path Forward

Governor Tom Wolf and members of the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force announced another bi-partisan effort to complete COVID phase 1A vaccinations first, set up mass vaccination clinics with regionally supplied plans to inform allocations, and vaccinate frontline workers.

“The efforts of the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force are making significant headway in getting more people vaccinated,” Gov. Wolf said. “The special initiative the Task Force agreed on last week to vaccinate educators, school staff, and early childhood educators is well underway, and we are making incredible progress vaccinating Pennsylvanians eligible in Phase 1A. These new initiatives will move us even further in the state’s vaccinate rollout.

“Last night, President Joe Biden laid out a bold plan for our country with a goal of making every American adult eligible to receive a vaccine by May 1. My administration is taking aggressive steps to meet that timeline, and we are fortunate to have the leadership and partnership of President Biden and his administration as we work to protect the people of Pennsylvania.”

Gov. Wolf outlined the key, significant progress the state is making in rolling out vaccine. Last month, the Acting Secretary of Health issued an order directing vaccine providers’ administration of COVID-19 vaccines to ensure that Pennsylvanians are vaccinated as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Since that order, the state’s hospital systems now have enough vaccine to partner with counties to create county vaccination sites, and the state has seen impressive improvements in its vaccine infrastructure and administration rates. Over the past month county vaccination rates are climbing, and many, including Westmoreland County and all collar counties in the Southeast, are at or above the statewide rate of 15 percent. Montgomery County is 5 percentage points above the statewide average for vaccination rates.

Nearly 1 million Pennsylvanians over 65 have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, and more than 72,000 people are being vaccinated every single day in Pennsylvania.

And, as President Biden mentioned last night, the state has been working with the federal government to set up 27 federal vaccine program sites in the commonwealth. Four of those sites are already participating in that program: three in Philadelphia and one in Lycoming County.

Today’s announcement of plans by the task force focus include three key areas that augment the significant progress already made:

- **Scheduling vaccine appointments for those in Phase 1A** who are still seeking a vaccination. To date nearly 1 million Pennsylvanians age 65 and older have received a first dose of vaccine. The number of Phase 1A eligible Pennsylvanians with a first dose now tops 3 million. More than 72,000 Pennsylvanians are being vaccinated every day.

“Our 1A population contains some of the most vulnerable Pennsylvanians, and it is crucial that these individuals get vaccinated as quickly as possible,” Wolf said. “The Secretary of Health will also be issuing an Order that will require vaccine providers to make best efforts to schedule all 1A appointments by the end of the month. To assist them in achieving this goal, we will be providing greater visibility into their future allocations. This will allow them to schedule appointments with confidence in having sufficient supply to keep those appointments.”

- **Establishing Regional Vaccination Clinics** using a portion of the weekly allocation of Johnson & Johnson vaccine doses after the completion of the special initiative to vaccinate teachers, school staff and child care workers. This will be made available to regions

and counties throughout the commonwealth.

Counties will be encouraged to work within their region to submit a proposal for a mass vaccination clinic, community vaccination clinics, mobile clinics or other strategy to vaccinate their region's currently eligible individuals. The Task Force will review proposals and determine those that best demonstrate an ability to support a mass vaccination clinic.

"We know that county leaders and emergency management organizations have been working hard to put plans in place and make preparations for vaccination sites in their communities," Gov. Wolf said. "We will be working closely with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania to create plans for these regional vaccine clinics."

- **Targeting frontline workers and first responders** using a portion of J&J doses. Targeted industries include law enforcement/correctional staff, grocery workers, firefighters (both career and volunteer), meat processing and agriculture workers.

"Our goal in establishing special vaccination initiatives is to help protect frontline, essential workers and their communities," Gov. Wolf said. "These are the Pennsylvanians who have had no choice but to continue serving our commonwealth during this pandemic. These workers, their families, and entire communities will be safer if they are vaccinated as quickly as possible."

Using the J&J supply to support regionally planned and facilitated mass vaccination sites, as well as quickly completing vaccine missions for critical frontline workers means more shots in arms while helping our seniors secure appointments and receive their vaccine before more broadly opening up to additional populations.

"This commitment today from the Administration will allow Pennsylvania to quickly achieve herd immunity, reopen our economy, and return to regular life," said Sen. Ryan Aument.

"We are committed to vaccinating our neighbors who are seniors in the next few weeks," Sen. Art Haywood said. "Plus, we are taking a big step to vaccinate black, brown and white people in frontline jobs. The end is in sight."

"Last week, we as a taskforce announced a special initiative that prioritized the health and safety of our teachers and our students across the commonwealth," said Rep. Bridget Malloy Kosierowski. "By securing and allocating the 94,600 doses of Johnson & Johnson Vaccines, educators, school staff, and early childhood educators across Pennsylvania are currently being vaccinated-paving a way to get our children safely back into the classrooms.

"With 200,000 J&J weekly doses coming to Pennsylvania starting the week of March 28 and our supply of Moderna and Pfizer continuing to increase weekly, today's announcement is another special initiative that again is a step in the right direction to not only protect our most vulnerable population but also speed up our vaccine rollout. Through the regional vaccination clinics, we will achieve greater access for seniors who have been struggling to find available doses and a more equitable distribution by allowing communities to direct doses to their most vulnerable residents and in April we will also be able to target our frontline, essential workers who have had no choice but to continue serving our commonwealth amidst this pandemic."

"While it has been a bumpy road for the Commonwealth with its vaccine administration rollout, I'm confident we are now on the right path," said Rep. Tim O'Neal. "I know concerns still exist surrounding vaccine supply and distribution, but today's announcement is another important step forward. I'm pleased we have made enough substantial progress with getting those in Group 1A vaccinated that our essential workers and first responders will soon be able to get the vaccine."

Gov. Wolf explained that the Task Force is still working through the details of these next special initiatives and will announce more information before additional Johnson & Johnson allocations become available on March 28.

"We have work to do to get the infrastructure in place to vaccinate these populations, which is why we're starting the process now," Gov. Wolf said. "We should all be excited about the fact that our vaccine allocations are increasing.

“Thanks to the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force legislative members for their partnership in addressing the challenges of the vaccine rollout and thanks to the many vaccine providers across the commonwealth. Without the efforts of on-the-ground vaccine providers, none of this would be possible.”