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Health Care and Seniors Groups Praise Governor Gianforte's Revision to Vaccine Distribution Plan

Governor's Office
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HELENA, Mont. – Last week, Governor Greg Gianforte unveiled a revised vaccine distribution plan that prioritizes protecting the most vulnerable Montanans. With Gianforte's revisions, Montanans most at-risk for serious illness or death from COVID-19 – Montanans 70 years of age and older, Montanans 16 to 69 years of age that have a severe underlying medical condition, and Native Americans and other people of color – are next in line for the vaccine, after frontline health care workers.

Here's what health care and seniors groups are saying:

Pamela Cutler, MD, president of the Montana Medical Association: "The Montana Medical Association (MMA) commends Governor Gianforte for prioritizing frontline health care personnel and Montana's elderly during the initial phase of COVID-19 vaccination distribution. The expanded availability to include Montanans age 70 years and older and those with high-risk medical conditions will help reduce illness and death. The governor's plan is in line with CDC recommendations and serves to protect public health, safeguard those most vulnerable, and ensure Montanans will continue to receive needed care during the pandemic. We look forward to working with Governor Gianforte to ensure an equitable vaccine allocation plan."

Jennifer Davenport, MD, CMO of St. James Healthcare, and Toni Green-Cheatwood, DO, CMO of Billings Clinic Health System: "We are eager for every Montanan to have the opportunity to receive the vaccine as soon as possible. However, with limited doses we support getting the vaccine to the most vulnerable next as outlined by the Governor."

Kristen Page-Nei, Montana government relations director for American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network: "The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network appreciates Governor Gianforte's recognition of the medical vulnerabilities that so many Montanans face when it comes to COVID-19. Montanans with high-risk medical conditions including cancer are at known increased risk of severe outcomes if they contract COVID-19. Those with medical vulnerabilities should consult with their healthcare providers before getting the vaccine. We look forward to the day when life can get back to a new normal, and in the meantime appreciate any efforts to protect our most vulnerable fellow Montanans."

Rich Rasmussen, president and CEO of the Montana Hospital Association: "The Montana Hospital Association appreciates Governor Gianforte's thoughtful approach of prioritizing the health of the most vulnerable in our state's vaccination plan and the need to approve liability protections before lifting the statewide mask requirement."

Cindy Stergar, CEO of the Montana Primary Care Association: "MPCA supports the plan to vaccinate all of the citizens of Montana with preference given to the most vulnerable populations. Recognizing that it will take many months to reach a level of immunization that helps provide wider population protection, we encourage Montanans to continue to follow the 3 Ws: watch your distance, wear your mask, and wash your hands."

Tim Summers, Montana state director of AARP: "The impact of COVID-19 has been massive across the nation and here in Montana. We need to look out for our friends, family and neighbors during these challenging times. The percentage of hospitalizations and deaths among older Montanans, those with underlying medical conditions, and Native Americans has been especially high. We appreciate the Governor's focus and priority to vaccinate those most at-risk for COVID-19 complications."

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ABOUT MONTANA

Population: 1,005,141

Nickname: Treasure State

State Capital: Helena

State Flower: Bitterroot

State Bird: Western Meadowlark

State Animal: Grizzly Bear

State Fish: Blackspotted Cutthroat Trout

State Gemstones: Sapphire & Agate

State Motto: Oro y Plata (Gold and Silver)