



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

March 1, 2021

Dear Dr. Thomas Farley,

We write to ask that the city work swiftly to support the opening of vaccination sites in South Philadelphia.

We are deeply concerned by the lack of COVID vaccine services being offered to residents of our respective districts in South Philadelphia, and South Philly as a whole. The current city map of vaccination sites shows dots to indicate the presence of a vaccination site. Even at a glance, the map is shocking: a huge swath of South Philadelphia is left dramatically unserved. We write on behalf of the constituents who have contacted us about the lack of vaccine access in their neighborhoods, as we share their concerns.

South Philadelphia is home to many senior citizens, people with serious medical challenges, essential and frontline workers, and a large, multi-lingual, multicultural immigrant community also calls South Philadelphia home. We are fortunate to have strong social service organizations that for years have been doing on the ground work to support these community members. The expertise and dedication of these providers are invaluable in reaching members of South Philadelphia's numerous immigrant communities. We write in support of a proposal to the city submitted by Jefferson, in partnership with SEAMAAC and others, that would create a vaccination site at their new health clinic the Wyss Wellness Center along with other possible locations. As city and state officials we urge the city to seriously consider this proposal which combines both medical expertise and strong roots within South Philadelphia's immigrant communities.

Our communities in South Philadelphia, particularly east of Broad, are home to many of the most recently arrived immigrant families; people are finding it hard enough to get information about vaccine phases and clinic locations, to have to navigate the system in one's second or third language compounds this barrier exponentially. The city must take real steps to ensure that resources, including translated materials and linguistically and culturally appropriate staffing, are devoted to creating multilingual vaccination efforts. Without realistic language access plans for South Philadelphia, and communities across the city, it will be impossible to achieve the comprehensive vaccine coverage needed to keep everyone safe.

Further, we call for the city to open, or support the opening of, additional sites focused on vaccinating South Philadelphia seniors. Many senior citizens here who qualify for the vaccine, are unable to travel the considerable distance that is currently required of them to get the shot.

The city sites in Kensington, North and West Philadelphia reportedly have the capacity to vaccinate up to 500 people a day and will eventually add a second standing clinic for second doses. At that point, the three clinics will be able to administer a total of 3,000 first- and second-dose shots per week. If we open additional community based sites now, albeit with limited doses, we can expand them as the number of doses expands. Here in South Philadelphia, we have schools, senior centers, rec centers, auditoriums and other large spaces that stand ready. Our constituents demand and deserve it.

For the last year, we have called upon people to make sacrifices to get through the pandemic, with the goal of the vaccine's arrival on the horizon. Now the vaccine is here, but it remains virtually inaccessible for many people who live in a huge portion of our city. So many people across South Philadelphia, already have inconsistent or nonexistent access to healthcare, and to the internet, we cannot let physical distance add another barrier to accessing the vaccine.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Fiedler
State Representative, District 184

Nikil Saval
State Senator, District 1

Regina Young
State Representative, District 185

Mark Squilla
City Councilmember, District 1