
February 11, 2021

The Honorable Phil Berger
NC Senate President Pro Tempore
16 West Jones Street, Rm. 2007
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Sen. Berger:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the NC Academy of Family Physicians and our 4,300 members across the state, we stand ready and eager to help the state with distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Family physicians are ideally suited to assist in this unprecedented roll out of vaccines. Our members are already on the front lines of the pandemic response – playing a critical role by diagnosing, testing, treating, and counseling COVID-19 patients and their families throughout North Carolina. In addition, every day our members provide immunizations for a myriad of other vaccine preventable diseases from measles to tetanus to influenza.

We believe it is crucial to incorporate community family physicians and their practices in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution process as quickly as possible. Our members are truly the foundation of the healthcare system. Across the country, nearly 200 million individuals see a family physician each year, and more than 500 million patient visits are made to primary care practices annually. Our members serve as trusted healthcare advisors to the residents of North Carolina, and family physicians will be crucial in combating vaccine hesitancy. As vaccine supplies increase, family physicians should become a core part of our state's COVID-19 vaccination strategy.

Beyond combating vaccine hesitancy, our members understand what patients are at most risk for COVID. They understand the clinical and socio-economic factors that place specific patients at greater risk for acquiring COVID and experiencing worse outcomes. We hope the state will provide some clinical discretion to ensure that non-elderly high-risk patients can receive the vaccine in a timely manner. You can rest assured that our members are committed to ensuring equitable access to vaccines, but also understand how to risk stratify their patients as part of their day-to-day practice. Failure to meaningfully incorporate family physicians into distribution and education efforts will ultimately jeopardize the long-term success of the state's vaccination strategies.

While we applaud the tireless work of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services during this unprecedented pandemic, as vaccine supplies increase, family physicians can and should play a crucial role in this effort. Routinely, NCAFP receives heart-breaking calls from our members wanting to immunize their patients. One member said the following: "my elderly and high-risk patients are telling me they will not get vaccinated at a pharmacy or in a line up at a hospital, but only if I tell them it's safe and provide the vaccine in my office."

In summary, our members, North Carolina's family physicians, stand ready to help. Family physicians have the experience in dealing with these issues and are a great resource for helping in this unprecedented immunization effort. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions.

With best regards,



Jessica L. Triche, MD, FAAFP, NCAFP President

cc: Gregory K. Griggs, MPA, CAE, Executive Vice President and CEO
Ken Melton & Associates, NCAFP Government Affairs Consultants