



December 4, 2020

Minnesota Department of Health  
COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Advisory Group

Dear COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Advisory Group:

SEIU Healthcare Minnesota represents more than 40,000 members who work in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, and self-directed homecare. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our members have worked on the frontline to care for Minnesotans stricken by this terrible disease.

Jamie Gulley  
President

Jigme Ugen  
Executive Vice President

Phillip Cryan  
Executive Vice President

Brenda Hilbrich  
Executive Vice President

We strongly agree with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine October 2, 2020 report that listed “high-risk health workers and first responders” as the highest (Phase 1a) priority. Each state, however, will need to define “health workers.” We urge MDH to define the term broadly enough to include both non-direct care workers, including dietary and housekeeping staff, in healthcare facilities and also in-home care workers, such as those who provide services funded by the state through the Personal Care Assistance, Consumer-Directed Community Supports, and Consumer Support Grant programs.

For far too long, too many of these workers have not been considered to be “real” workers or full members of the health care team. Specifically, because these workers were often women and people of color, they were often left out of key labor protections and their pay lags that of other health care workers. At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates how our individual health depends on the health of our whole community, it would be terrible if lingering assumptions about service workers and in-home care workers excluded them from the definition of “health workers.”

Finally, we recommend that vaccination not be a required condition of employment. Previous experience suggests that mandates are counter-productive and only increase suspicion and make people more likely to resist vaccination.

Sincerely yours,

Jamie Gulley  
President

345 Randolph Avenue  
Suite 100  
St. Paul, MN  
55102

651.294.8100  
800.828.0206  
(fax) 651.294.8200  
[www.seiuhhealthcaremn.org](http://www.seiuhhealthcaremn.org)