

Posted on: March 18, 2021

SOUTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT ON REGIONAL PEMA VACCINE SITE

After meeting with the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DoH) regarding plans to open a regional PEMA site to distribute the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, elected officials from the four-county region issued the following statement:

"We are extremely disappointed to hear that PA DoH is not considering our request to allocate the Johnson and Johnson vaccine directly to Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties. We have reiterated our concerns about establishing a regional PEMA site for many reasons, and we remain deeply concerned that equitable distribution will be compromised at such a site.

"Instead of working with local elected officials and county Health Departments closest to the people we serve, the State has chosen to take the advice of a Boston logistics company to establish regional sites as our local mass vaccination sites sit underutilized. We have highly qualified public health and safety teams in place, high-volume locations secured, and more than 500,000 people waiting on our collective lists to get their shots. We just need more supply.

"Opening a separate state-run vaccination location raises many important questions that our residents deserve to know the answers to, such as will they have to pre-register on yet another list to receive the vaccine at these new regional vaccine sites or if their current places in line will be kept. We also have questions on how will the state ensure equitable access for these regional sites including options for telephone registration and language access. These questions remain to be answered. The last thing we want is to see our constituents have to sign up for yet another list when they have already been waiting for weeks.

"We also remain concerned that without an allocation of single shot Johnson and Johnson vaccines our efforts to efficiently vaccinate our most vulnerable residents will be hampered. This includes residents experiencing homelessness, homebound individuals, and people within our correctional facilities.

"For all these reasons, we implore Pennsylvania DoH to allocate its surplus supply of the one shot Johnson and Johnson vaccine to counties directly.

"Recognizing that the decision will be made by the Pennsylvania DoH and in order to meet its requirement that the four counties provide two sites acceptable to all of the counties, Bucks County and Montgomery County will identify a joint site and Chester County and Delaware County will identify a joint site. In the hope that the Pennsylvania DoH will give further consideration to our request to allow the four counties to distribute the vaccine, each County is also identifying an additional site that it is prepared to run that would be able to distribute its share of the vaccine."