

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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WHATCOM COUNTY HEALTH BOARD

February 2, 2021

Secretary Dr. Umair Shah
Washington State Department of Health
101 Israel Rd
Tumwater, WA 98504

Secretary Shah,

We recognize that vaccine shortages nationwide are creating frustration and confusion among those eligible to receive the vaccine. This is a challenge experienced by every jurisdiction in our country. We are concerned, however, about the lack of transparency regarding the distribution of vaccine to Whatcom County and throughout Washington State.

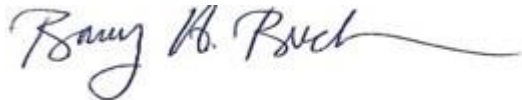
More specifically:

1. Allocation of vaccine from county to county is not clearly defined or seemingly based on population, number eligible or other reasonable metrics. This week, Whatcom County enrolled providers requested (by our best estimate) more than 8,000 doses and received 700 first doses of Moderna and zero first doses of Pfizer. Island County, with a population just 37% of Whatcom County's, received 700 first doses of Moderna and 975 first doses of Pfizer. We don't share this with the intention to compete for limited resources with our neighbors, but there is no clarity in why that decision was made.
2. Whatcom County has vaccinated just over 25% of individuals eligible due to vaccine supply. With increased focus from the state, via state-run vaccine clinics, to 'catch up' some counties, why are counties that have vaccinated nearly all eligible still receiving more vaccine than those counties that are 'behind'?
3. Whatcom County learned this week that of the 34 enrolled providers, only pharmacies would receive vaccine. This was confusing and frustrating for clinics and healthcare providers that have created expanded capacity, added staff, and communicated with their eligible patients. How is DOH making decisions about which enrolled providers receive vaccine and what quantity of vaccine they receive? We know that allocation is not commensurate with requests, but don't have details or transparency around how these decisions are made.
4. Providers report dramatic inconsistencies from one week to the next in their vaccine allocation. One large provider reported receiving nearly 1,000 one week, requiring overtime and additional clinics to meet the 95% requirement set by the Governor, and then receiving zero doses the following week. This inconsistency makes planning, scheduling appointments, and staffing extremely challenging.

Our providers in Whatcom County have embraced our community goal of vaccinating everyone who wants a vaccine. We ask, on their behalf as well as on behalf of our confused and frustrated constituents, to provide more transparency and rationale behind decision-making. We ask that this be provided publicly, on the DOH website, and to our providers each week when sharing their allocation.

As elected officials we are doing our best to encourage our constituents to support our recommendations, but our ability to do that is dependent on our ability to demonstrate transparency and logic behind State Health Department policies and procedures. Please help us, to help you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Buchanan" with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Barry Buchanan, Chair
Whatcom County Health Board

C: County Executive Satpal Sidhu
Health Department Director Erika Lautenbach
Councilmembers
AB2020-219