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32 Racial Justice, Immigrant Justice, Civil Rights and Public Health Organizations Request Urgent Meeting with Gov. Baker on Vaccine Equity

BOSTON, MA – Today, 32 racial justice, immigrant justice, civil rights and public health organizations that make up the Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition sent a letter to Governor Baker requesting an urgent meeting on vaccine equity in Massachusetts. The letter comes more than a month after the Coalition first issued a set of five demands to the Governor to ensure an equitable vaccine rollout. The Coalition would like to discuss the Governor’s progress on meeting their goals and ways to address the significant inequities in the state’s vaccine distribution plan, particularly for Black, Latinx, Asian and immigrant residents.

“It’s been more than a month since Black, Latinx, Asian and immigrant leaders of the Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition issued five demands to Governor Baker to ensure an equitable vaccine rollout in Massachusetts,” said Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition Co-Chairs Dr. Atyia Martin of the Black Boston COVID-19 Coalition, Eva Millona of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, and Carlene Pavlos of the Massachusetts Public Health Association. “While we appreciate the progress that the Governor has made, particularly the additional investments in his Vaccine Equity Initiative, our Coalition still has outstanding questions and concerns. The fact of the matter is that despite the Governor’s rhetoric and efforts, vaccine access in Massachusetts remains deeply inequitable along racial lines, particularly in the communities that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. We cannot wait another day for answers from the Baker administration, as people continue to lose their lives each and every day. We urge Governor Baker to meet with the Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition immediately to strategize on how we can close these gaps.”

Chief among the Coalition’s concerns is that the Baker administration is not distributing the promised additional 20% vaccine allocation for the hardest hit communities in Massachusetts. While the Baker administration has taken some important steps by directing more funding to outreach initiatives, allocating the promised additional doses is indispensable to closing persistent racial gaps in access to the vaccine. The administration must answer for why they are backing off this commitment. Additionally, the Coalition needs clarity on the goals the administration has set to measure its progress on closing racial gaps, as well as how quickly the new funding for community and faith-based organizations will be distributed and if there will be additional investments.

Despite the Baker administration’s stated recognition of structural racism’s impact on the state’s ability to ensure vaccine equity and its goal to provide support to the 20 hardest-hit municipalities, the state’s numbers continue to paint a troubling picture. White residents have received 14.7 times more doses than Black residents, 15.0 times more doses than Latinx residents and 17.5 times more doses than Asian residents. Put another way, 25.7% of white residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine compared to 16.9% of Black residents, 14.8% of Asian residents and 9.8% of Latinx residents.

These numbers are in stark contrast to the disproportionate burden of disease, hospitalization, and death that Black, Latinx and Asian residents have suffered over the last 12 months. These gaps have not been reduced in the last three weeks; in fact, the gap appears to be increasing for Black residents.

Furthermore, the inequities are most pronounced in our most diverse communities that have been hardest hit by COVID-19. For example, in Lawrence, 82% of the population is Latino but only 3% of Latino residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine. White residents make up just 12% of Lawrence's population but 55% have received at least one dose.

The letter was sent to Governor Baker on Tuesday and can be read [here](#). Signatories include the following members of the Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition: ACLU of Massachusetts, Asian Women for Health, Black Boston COVID-19 Coalition, Black Economic Council of Massachusetts, Immigrants Assistance Center, Jetpac Resource Center, La Colaborativa, Lawyers for Civil Rights, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative, Agencia ALPHA, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, Brazilian Worker Center, Caribbean Youth Club, Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores, Centro Presente, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, ICNA Relief, Immigrant Family Services Institute, MetroWest Workers Center: CASA, New North Citizen Council, Pioneer Valley Workers Center, Rian Immigrant Center, Sociedad Latina, Massachusetts Public Health Association, NAACP New Bedford, NAACP New England Area Conference, Somerville Mayor's Office, Southeast Asian Coalition of Central MA, Union of Minority Neighborhoods, the Welcome Project, and Worcester Together Coalition.

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