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Monday, February 1, 2021

Dear Governor Pritzker,

With the discovery of potentially more contagious variants in Illinois, we must urgently accelerate the pace of COVID-19 vaccinations to save lives and do so with attention to equity and ease. Illinois is lagging behind the rest of the nation, ranking near the bottom in vaccine distribution and administration. We echo concerns raised about the delay in vaccination of high risk nursing home residents. In addition, the process of scheduling a vaccination is extremely cumbersome for many people, especially our seniors, and fraught with inequity. To avoid greater inequities and harm to those who lack access to high speed WI-FI or technology, or with limited technology literacy for a myriad of reasons, we strongly advise against the use of first-come first-serve websites. First-come first-serve websites not only create a systemic bias, but also add to the stress and chaos of scheduling a vaccine. Pre-registration coupled with lotteries can not only improve equity, but also reduce the stress and effort to schedule a vaccination. Proactive outreach by telephone to those who are unable to access or use technology and those with limited English proficiency is urgently needed. Additionally, those who have been initially hesitant or face significant challenges in getting an appointment are at risk of giving up altogether. All of these factors will also be more likely to harm our Black and Latinx communities, who face a greater risk of death but are not being vaccinated at the rate of their White counterparts. Lastly, every effort should be made to not only help people get their first dose, but also facilitate scheduling of 2nd dose appointments to ensure maximal immunity is achieved. Through urgent action, we can not only improve vaccine access and administration but also save lives in Illinois.

Sincerely,

IMPACT (Illinois Medical Professionals Action Collaborative Team)