



# Retired Public Employees Association

Representing the interests of 500,000 New York state and local government retirees  
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Diana M. Hinchcliff, *President*      Edward C. Farrell, *Executive Director*

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo  
Executive Chamber  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The Retired Public Employees Association represents the interests of nearly 500,000 state and local government retirees and their beneficiaries. The vast majority of our members are over 65 and a large percentage are over 75. Many have underlying health conditions that put them at high risk for contracting the COVID-19 virus and, in fact, some have. It is imperative that they be able to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

New York needs a new vaccine distribution system. According to the New York State Department of Health website, most of the state vaccination sites have no appointments for the next 13 weeks. We appreciate that the demand far exceeds the doses available but it is clear that the current first come, first served system is not working for those who need to be served most.

Our members tell us they have to enter the same information each time they check the NYSDOH website but they have not been able to make an appointment for a vaccination because none are available. Calling the hotline number elicits a recording that states the system is overwhelmed and no one can answer. One of our members was able to make an appointment only at midnight and others are being forced to book appointments at locations that are hours away from their home.

RPEA is suggesting a one-stop online system that would eliminate the need to constantly check for eligibility at all hours of the day and night. Applicants would register once, giving an email address and/or cell phone number, and choose the date or dates and location they prefer. Their information would then be stored in a database. They could also choose first, second, third or no preference for appointment times with the caveat that they may be given a different slot. They would be notified by email and/or text when their desired appointment is available, which they would have to confirm. Regional call-in numbers would be created for those who don't have a computer (like some of our elderly members) or wi-fi access and have questions or need to register online. This would be a saner, more user-friendly system with less anxiety and frustration than currently exists.

We understand that many more vaccination sites will be opened. However, if applicants have to visit each site individually and if appointments are allotted on a first come, first served basis, people will have no better luck with these than with the state facilities.

We urge you to consider our suggestion or establish a better system. New Yorkers' health depends on it.

Sincerely,

Diana M. Hinchcliff  
President, RPEA

cc:

Hon. Howard Zucker, New York State Department of Health  
Hon. Andrea Stewart Cousins, NYS Senate  
Hon. Carl Heastie, NYS Assembly  
Hon. Gustavo Rivera, Senate Health Committee  
Hon. Richard Gottfried, Assembly Health Committee