



January 8, 2021

Governor Cuomo, Chair
National Governors Association
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Washington DC 20001
Email: gov.cuomo@chamber.state.ny.us
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Dr. Jose Romero, Chair
Advisory Committee on Immunization
Practices (ACIP), Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd NE, Mailstop H24-8
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027
Email: acip@cdc.gov

RE: Access to COVID-19 Vaccine for Deep-Sea Mariners

Dear Governor Cuomo and Dr Romero:

Please consider our appeal for assistance in facilitating access to vaccines for the approximately 14,000 U.S. citizen merchant mariners who are responsible for keeping the economic and military supply lines of the United States open on the high seas. The undersigned organizations are deeply concerned that the military and economic security of our nation may be at risk if the distribution of vaccines allows seafarers to fall between the cracks of federal and state efforts to distribute vaccines under the guidelines established by the ACIP. Specifically, because of the time spent at sea and countries visited by merchant mariners, this workforce is at significant risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19. Further, this community does not have access to appropriate medical care at sea or, at this time, in almost all foreign ports. We feel we can offer a solution as to how to inoculate these essential front line workers.

We recognize the priorities established by the ACIP which classifies merchant seamen as “other essential workers” in priority phase 1c along with 57 million other workers and after the vaccination of approximately 30 million workers in Phase 1b. However, our reason for appealing to you is grave concern about access to vaccinations within Phase 1c by our very mobile workforce that does not fall routinely under the jurisdiction of any one particular state.

Under the risk-based approach, seafarers rank high on three of the four criteria: risk of acquiring infection, risk of negative societal impact and risk of transmitting to others. Seafarers by nature of their work travel to all parts of the world and regularly interact with people from other countries, cultures, health systems. Even during heightened awareness of COVID-19 with precautionary measures in place, vessel crews are at great risk of contracting the virus. The industry has experienced and will continue to experience COVID-19 outbreaks aboard ship.

Seafarers live and work closely together in multi-generational settings aboard ship for months at a time. The close contact and risk of exposure aboard ship is exacerbated by the lack of medical care when mariners become infected while engaged in extended foreign voyages or when routinely denied shoreside access to medical care in foreign ports. Professional medical care and hospital equipment is simply not available aboard merchant ships. One infected crew member may readily infect the entire ship’s crew, most often with no medivac available and frequently with no port of refuge which will permit ill seafarers to disembark and seek medical care.



American seafarers represent a miniscule population when compared to almost every other sector which is given priority in the ACIP framework. It is essential that, while seafarers are classified as phase 1 c “Other Essential Workers – Transportation and Logistics” that care be taken to ensure that states with major ports ensure that vaccines are available to U.S seafarers. This can be done cooperatively with U.S-flag employers and at facilities located in each port.

With oversight from the appropriate government entity and our marine employers, we can assist with the distribution of vaccines and provide support for medical personal at the locations listed below. The U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) has the ability to support in this effort and a deep understanding of what is necessary. We urge your support in assuring the distribution of vaccines to approved medical professionals for vaccination of merchant mariners at the following locations:

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|---------------|--|-----------------|--|
| Baltimore: | MEBA Diagnostic Center
1005 Eastern Ave
Baltimore MD 21202 | S. Florida: | AMO
601 S. Federal Highway
Dania beach, FL 3304 |
| Boston: | MEBA/MM&P
12 Channel Street, Suite 606
Boston, MA 02210-2333 | New Orleans: | MEBA
8111 Carondelet Street
New Orleans, LA 70130-3707 |
| Charleston: | MM&P
1481 Tobias Gadson Blvd., Ste 2C
Charleston, SC 29407-4794 | NY/NJ: | MEBA
37 Edward Hart Dr
Jersey City, NJ 07305 |
| Detroit Area: | SIU
520 St. Clair River Dr.
Algonac, MI 48001 | Norfolk: | MEBA/MM&P
6325 North Center Dr, Ste 100
Norfolk VA 23502 |
| Honolulu: | Urgent Clinic of Waikiki
2155 Kalakaua Ave, Suite 308
Honolulu, HI 96815 | San Juan, PR: | SIU
659 Hill Side Street
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00920 |
| Houston: | SIU
625 N. York St.
Houston, TX 77003 | SF/Oakland: | Seafarer’s Medical Center
730 Harrison Street, Ste. 100
San Francisco, CA 94107 |
| Jacksonville: | SIU
5100 Belfort Rd
Jacksonville, FL 32256 | Seattle/Tacoma: | Kaiser Permanente
Occupational Health Services
Capitol Hill Campus, North Building
310 15 th Ave East
Seattle, WA 98112 |
| LA/LB: | Concentra Urgent Care
100 Oceangate, P245
Long Beach, CA 90802 | Tampa: | MEBA/MM&P
4333 South 50 th Street
Tampa, FL 33619 |



Our numbers are not great, but we play an outsized role in maintaining the economic and military security of our nation. Because of the time and specialized training necessary to provide professional seafarers and the critical nature of efficient movement of basic goods and commodities to and from our shores and to our military bases overseas, personnel losses due to illness or death will have a disproportionately grave impact on our transportation infrastructure.

At one time this was recognized by the establishment of U.S Public Health Service Hospitals, "Marine Hospitals," that looked after the health of our nation's seafarers. This is no longer the case. In absence of a federal framework for vaccine distribution, we appeal for your assistance in facilitating the distribution of vaccines to approved locations and medical providers for essential worker merchant seamen.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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