

Chaotic vaccination rollout leaves New Yorkers vulnerable to COVID-19 surge

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New York's political establishment and public health officials are issuing dire warnings of imminent COVID-19 vaccination site closures, as the city and state face shortages due to inadequate supply from the federal government.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio warned that without a "major" resupply, "there will not be any doses left in the city of New York at the end of next week."

The federal government has recently expanded eligibility for who may receive the vaccine, which now includes 7 million New Yorkers. Meanwhile, the supply made available to New York state has decreased.

For his part, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo expressed frustration over the "drip, drip" rate of vaccine procurement and confusion arising from "7 million people chasing 250,000 doses." "That is the mathematical problem that you can't solve," he stated in a news conference on Sunday.

In an attempt on Monday to bypass the federal government distribution program known as Operation Warp Speed, Cuomo wrote a letter directly to the pharmaceutical company Pfizer requesting that New York be allowed to purchase doses directly.

He complained, "After myself and seven other governors called on the Trump Administration to release more doses, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said that relief was on the way. To date, however, the federal government has not acted on that promise—in fact, New York will receive just 250,000 doses this week, 50,000 fewer than the week prior."

He added that the additional doses would allow the state to "fill the dosage gap created this week by the outgoing federal administration."

In Pfizer's rejection of Cuomo's request, the company stated that it was obliged to operate under the distribution model of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The workaround proposed by the New York governor would need DHHS approval.

In keeping with the disaster unfolding nationally, New York's vaccine program has proven chaotic and inadequate. Even prior to the reduction in its weekly federal vaccine allotment, the program was crippled by cancellations, online registration forms that did not work, and doses that had to be dumped because they could not be administered in time. Vaccination locations opened, only to close days later due to low supply.

Last week, 20,000 people had their appointments voided at the Stony Brook vaccination site due to an incorrect website link. New York City was recently forced to reschedule 23,000 people, due to a delay in the delivery of over 100,000 doses from Moderna. The Brooklyn Army Terminal site had to close just a few days after opening because it ran out of doses.

In response, anger, confusion and bitterness have become widespread as desperate New Yorkers are forced to navigate a dysfunctional system in a race against a disease that has already claimed the lives of over 33,000 people within the state.

The urgent need to vaccinate the population has taken on an ever more acute character with the news of 18 confirmed cases of the UK variant of COVID-19 in New York. This strain, which is more infectious, has driven recent surges in infections in the UK. Recently, the country was compelled to enforce a third lockdown.

Across New York, there are currently more than 9,000 people hospitalized for COVID-19. The state's positivity rate stands at 7.06 percent. Despite the fact

that positivity rate in New York City dropped from the post-holiday peak of 9.49 percent to 8.53 percent over the last two weeks, hospitalizations per 100,000 residents have gone up from 4.28 to 5.08 over the same period.

According to the figures from the state's website, only 757,466 individuals have received one or both inoculations of the vaccine in New York—just 3.5 percent of the state's population. If the current rate of vaccinations is not accelerated, it will take several more months before half of the state's residents are protected from infection. Such a delay could cause infections to overwhelm the battered hospital systems, leading to another spike in mortality.

Notwithstanding their hand-wringing over the public health crisis gripping the state and its largest city, Mayor de Blasio and Governor Cuomo have played a direct, criminal role in allowing New York to become an epicenter of the pandemic.

The two, both Democrats, have presided over the ruthless execution of the ruling class's herd immunity policy. In early 2020, they delayed the imposition of lockdown measures for weeks and forced assisted living facilities to readmit COVID-19-positive patients regardless of whether they had the means to isolate the sick. In-person schooling and nonessential businesses have undergone repeated reopenings.

Currently, the fact that K-12 education staff and college instructors are eligible under Phase 1b of the state's vaccination plan to receive the vaccine is being used to insist that educational institutions remain open or reopen, irrespective of whether schools and colleges remain vectors for the spread of COVID-19.

As recently as two weeks ago, Cuomo made clear the approach. "We simply cannot stay closed until the vaccine hits critical mass. The cost is too high. We will have nothing left to open. We must reopen the economy, but we must do it smartly and safely," he declared.

As a result of these policies, New York has one of the highest COVID-19 death rates in the country.

The working class in the United States and internationally finds itself at a crossroads. The potential to save millions of lives through the quick development and distribution of vaccines is actively being undermined by a capitalist system that subordinates everything to the needs of a parasitic ruling class.

It is still not too late to wrest control of all such essential public health measures and save countless lives in New York, as well as nationally and internationally. The strike of market workers at Hunts Point is an example of the struggle that must be waged by workers everywhere in opposition to the homicidal COVID-19 policies of the ruling class.



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