

# U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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January 30, 2021

Dear Fellow Marylander:

Let's talk about the COVID-19 vaccine again. Last month, after the first vaccines were approved for use in the United States, I urged everyone to talk to their doctor and get a vaccine as soon as they would be eligible. At the time, we didn't know exactly how few doses were going to be made available to states and how botched that limited distribution might be.

Starting at square one, the vaccines being distributed today by Pfizer and Moderna use a protein from the COVID-19 virus to help your body create antibodies to fight the virus and disease it causes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), after getting vaccinated, you develop an immunity to the disease without having to get it first. Despite the myths out there, you ARE NOT being injected with live or dead virus.

Studies have shown that the current vaccines, which are administered in two doses, can lessen your chances of getting severely sick by 95 percent, making it one of the best weapons we have in the fight against COVID-19.

Our scientists followed all the regular clinical research and regulatory approval procedures in the development of this vaccine, and they were able to accomplish such a miraculous feat in record time because federal government funding was in place to back up their work. Do not let the concentrated timeline scare you away from getting the vaccine when you are able. With a choice between serious illness or possible long-term

problems due to COVID-19 infection, or taking a vaccine, I would hope most people would choose the vaccine.

Getting the vaccine into the arms of hundreds of millions of people in this country in a short period of time was always going to be a challenge.

Unfortunately, Maryland has one of the slowest vaccine rollouts among any state, though it has recently improved relative to other states. Data from the CDC shows Maryland has vaccinated over 7,320 people out of every 100,000.

As of January 29, the CDC shows that Maryland has received 881,675 doses, though it is unclear how this breaks down between long-term care facilities versus local health departments and hospitals. As of January 29, CDC registered 442,565 doses administered while Maryland's tracking system registered 483,149 vaccinations including 406,168 first-dose shots.

Each week, Maryland receives about 70,000-73,000, averaging 10,000 doses a day. As President Joe Biden's National Strategy for the COVID-19 response and pandemic preparedness plan kicks into high gear, we hope to see those numbers accelerate soon. Previously, there was no reliable plan or distribution system in place to get the vaccine to each state.

After he was sworn into office, President Biden signed an executive order directing relevant agencies to exercise all appropriate authorities, including the Defense Production Act, to meet all the necessary equipment and material to accelerate the manufacture, delivery, and administration of COVID-19 vaccine. He also directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to begin standing up the first federally supported community vaccination centers, with the goal of standing up 100 centers in the next month. The CDC will also launch the federal pharmacy program -- making vaccines available to communities in their local pharmacies.

All this is to state the obvious: demand for vaccines has far surpassed the supply. There had been no real system in place and the delays are a direct result of the Trump administration's failure. The Biden administration is working to make up lost ground.

We have a long way to go and I know how frustrating it has been for Marylanders who thought they were eligible to sign up for a vaccine appointment only to have trouble with the online system or even finding an available appointment once they did enter in all their information. Some people are getting appointments and others are not. There are questions of fairness and ongoing concerns about equity between communities.

As long as demand outpaces supply, we can all understand that there must be some kind of priority system for distribution. But that plan must be clear and reasonable. Rushing to the next phase before supply can catch up is a

recipe for greater frustration. We need more transparency at the federal AND state levels so that everyone has a greater level of confidence in how the limited supplies of vaccine are distributed.

If I can get any message across to you today, it is to stress the importance for everyone to get vaccinated to protect themselves, but also to protect their family and their community. The more people who are vaccinated, the greater chance we have to get this virus under control.

Without a vaccine, it will take longer for our schools to reopen safely; businesses, especially restaurants and event venues, will remain shuttered; hospitals will continue to be overwhelmed with patients. As more people become vaccinated, the fewer people who might get sick or have a severe reaction to the virus. And the more we can get back to an almost normal way of living.

I know the frustrations remain. But I urge you to have patience and be ready and willing. All eligible individuals should get the COVID-19 vaccine – both doses.

Only as a community can we fight back against this deadly virus.

Thank you and stay safe.



Ben Cardin

**For more details on the COVID-19 vaccine, please check out my recent Facebook Live program. You can [click here to view it on Facebook](#). Or [click here for YouTube](#). I was honored to be joined by Dr. Ernest Carter, Prince George's County's Health Officer and Dr. Josh Sharfstein, former Maryland Health Secretary and Vice Dean of Public Health Practice and Community Engagement, Johns Hopkins University.**

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