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January 13, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

New Yorkers 50 and older have accounted for more than 95 percent of this State's deaths from COVID-19, according to the State Department of Health. That is why it is so important that older New Yorkers be prioritized to receive COVID-19 vaccines - and that the system they access to receive vaccines works, and works efficiently.

AARP is hearing from our members across the state that the current system to sign up for a vaccination is not working as it should. Most of our members we continue to hear from cannot schedule an appointment: their screens freeze when trying to access the State website; the link to the website doesn't work, they wait hours after calling the State's toll-free telephone number, only to be told they need to go to the website. In many instances, our members cannot access the internet.

Some people are getting through, but many are not.

This is unacceptable to AARP and should be to all New Yorkers. New York State can and must do better.

AARP is calling upon your leadership and your proven record of cutting through bureaucracy to benefit those in need. The current system must be fixed as soon as possible to allow all those who access the State's website or call the State's toll-free telephone number to make an appointment for a vaccination.

More immediate assistance is necessary for older New Yorkers who are not tech-savvy and who are experiencing difficulties signing up for vaccinations online. AARP urges you to immediately instruct the State Office for the Aging to establish a dedicated 1-800 number for seniors to call to receive assistance in signing up for a vaccination.


Furthermore, we are also hearing that some New Yorkers, after receiving their first vaccination, have been told to return to the State website to schedule their second shot. The failure to schedule an appointment for the needed follow-up shot when the first shot is administered is causing confusion and delays in some receiving their second shot. New York should require uniform standards across the State to ensure that an appointment for the needed follow-up shot

be made when New Yorkers receive their first shot, regardless of whether the first shot was administered by a State-run vaccination site or a private site.

Finally, to increase public awareness of vaccine allocations and improve confidence in a fair distribution process, New Yorkers must have access to accurate and transparent information. We urge you to ensure information and updates on vaccine administration are posted regularly on a public website, similar to how the State Department of Health website has provided regularly updated information detailing the spread of COVID-19 in New York since the pandemic began.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to the people of this state. AARP stands ready to help.

Sincerely,



Beth Finkel
State Director
AARP New York

cc:
Melissa DeRosa
Secretary to the Governor