



Legislative Building

Washington State Legislature

Olympia, WA 98504-0600

March 4, 2021

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor

Secretary Umair Shah
Washington State Department of Health

Dear Governor Inslee and Secretary Shah,

As legislators from the 40th district, we understand the systemic challenges and statewide shortages of the COVID-19 vaccine. We commend the collaborative process the state has taken to ensure the needs of our local communities are met and industry feedback is considered. Unfortunately, we have been hearing immense fear and frustration from our district for months now about COVID-19 vaccine availability and the perceived inequitable distribution to our Northwest region. We are especially concerned about Anacortes whose primary health care provider, Island Hospital, has received zero first doses for the fourth consecutive week. This trend is concerning and unacceptable. Anacortes is in an emergency crisis, and swift action is necessary to protect our vulnerable populations.

To date, Island Hospital has administered 1,752 first doses, and have followed up with second doses to 1,547 people. They are two hundred doses away from having this group completely inoculated, and this is a shining example to the hospital's dedication and effectiveness within the community. They have proven their capability to step up when needed, and now we need the Department of Health to do the same in providing them their full allocation of vaccines. They have installed the necessary freezer equipment and are ready to receive their full requested amount of 800 Moderna doses for the week of March 8th. They have staff members standing by, ready to get our constituents vaccinated. High school students are volunteering their time to guide our older population through the Phase Finder process, and to search for appointments online. The 1B eligible community population on Fidalgo Island stands at over 7,000 people, and those in their entire service area over the age of 65 make up over a third of the total population, which is approximately 20,000 residents.

As the state re-opens, and people begin to go back to in person work, school, dining, and travel to the Skagit Valley, we must ensure our residents feel safe in leaving their homes. The concerns we have heard from our constituents are heartbreaking and widespread. With our community members still feeling isolated and trapped in their homes, feeling abandoned by the state only exacerbates their anxiety. We share with you some of their comments:

It is very discouraging to read the news of how many people are being vaccinated in other areas of our state, when we are unable, week after week, to even make an appointment.

We have been attempting to obtain Covid vaccinations locally since early January. While we understand that our experiences are shared nationally ... Island Hospital [has] received no new doses since February 1st (and then the number was 100 for which appointments were full in less than 5 minutes).

What is being done to ensure the vaccination process for Anacortes and the rest of your district improves? The problem is NOT limited to federal supply problems. Gov Inslee's [mention] about WA's one-millionth vaccine was also great to see. It does nothing for your communities that are receiving ZERO doses to administer.

Local community and hospital leaders are working their tails off to serve their neighbors, and they're being let down by a poorly conceived and mismanaged process.

I'm trying hard not to despair, but this is devastating information.

All sides point fingers at one another, while the community (a community that is thankfully eager to embrace the vaccination) sits by waiting.

We are proud to represent the beautiful island community of Anacortes and stand in solidarity with our constituents during this crisis. Please consider this our urgent request to equitably distribute vaccines to Island Hospital moving forward and fully accommodate their ask of 800 doses per week to make up for lost time. We understand Island Hospital is one of many rural areas that have been left out of last month's vaccine distribution and we hope they can be a part of the plan moving forward. Together we can ensure our state is healthy and safe as we work towards mass COVID-19 immunization.

We appreciate your time and attention to this critical matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

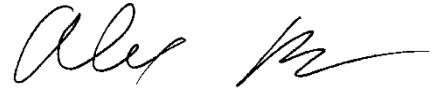
Sincerely,



Liz Lovelett
State Senator
40th Legislative District



Debra Lekanoff
State Representative
40th Legislative District, Pos. 1



Alex Ramel
State Representative
40th Legislative District, Pos. 2
