

December 29, 2020

Dear Governor Inslee and Secretary Shah:

Thank you for your steadfast leadership on the COVID-19 pandemic in our state.

We, as BIPOC organizations and communities and allies, want to bring your attention to a racial inequity in Washington State's Interim Vaccine Plan, which omits a vulnerable high-risk group with disproportionate BIPOC representation: **dependent elders in family-based/home-based care.**

You have been an advocate for equity. Please address this unjust situation by:

- 1. Adding dependent seniors and caregivers in home-based or family-based care as part of group 1a or as a priority sub-group in 1b so that our elders and caregivers can access vaccines as soon as possible and prevent infections.*
- 2. Partner with and fund community-based organizations in cultural communities, such as community health clinics, to serve as vaccine access points for elders in home care.*

BIPOC and immigrant and refugee communities commonly care for our elders at home, often until the end of life, due to lack of long-term care that is affordable, accessible and language- and culturally-appropriate. As a result, there is a higher prevalence of informal caregivers in these communities.ⁱ The National Asian Pacific Center on Aging, for example, tells us that 42 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islanders are family caregivers, as compared to 22 percent of the general population.ⁱⁱ

In addition, the Family Caregiver Alliance, the National Alliance on Caregiving and AARP, and the American Psychological Association collectively report that BIPOC family caregivers:

- More frequently share the same home with the care recipient than for non-Hispanic white caregivers, and, as a result, have higher burdens of caregiving.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Have lower socioeconomic status than white caregivers.
- Often provide care without paid help and report experiencing financial impacts more than whites, such as leaving bills unpaid or paying them late, having to take a leave of absence from work, or being unable to afford basic expenses.^{iv}
- Make less use of formal support services, are more likely to receive support from family members and friends, and need culturally-tailored home- and community-based care options to supplement family caregiver support.^v

Our elders frequently have chronic diseases such as dementia, requiring an intensive level of care that can only be provided collectively, by family members, with support from the community at large. In effect, these homes function as nursing homes, and family caregivers serve as front line health care workers, just unpaid and unlicensed.^{vi}

The pandemic has made situations for these families worse. Because of COVID, many family caregivers must choose between either 1) doing the work entirely on their own, in isolation with their elder relative, and foregoing their own livelihoods to minimize exposure risk for their elder, or 2) getting help from outside the household and sacrificing their elder's safety. The resulting toll has become unsustainable for many. Both AARP and the Diverse Elders Coalition have cited this:

“The impact on [caregiving] families now with COVID is a serious and heartbreaking issue,” said Lynn Friss Feinberg, senior strategic policy advisor at the AARP Public Policy Institute. “The financial strain, emotional strain and physical health impacts we see as a result of caregiving have been exacerbated by COVID-19.”^{vii}

Yet, vaccine policymaking thus far seems to assume that high-risk/high-mortality seniors are largely in congregate facilities, and those who are not are primarily independent and can wait additional months for the vaccine. This view is skewed: It does not recognize that many fragile elders in immigrant, refugee and BIPOC communities have been unable to access mainstream care since well before the pandemic.

Our communities also often have language barriers, which means less awareness of resources and ability to self-advocate. And, because data on Asian Pacific Islanders is often aggregated, it masks the needs of specific sub-groups. This disparity has come into focus with COVID.^{viii}

Taken together, these factors leave communities like ours bearing a disproportionate burden of the impact of COVID while also rendering us invisible. Our families are worried that their older loved ones will fall through the cracks when they desperately need some relief. Our communities already struggle with inequities in the senior long-term care system. Having to wait any longer for the vaccine adds to their heavy burden.

Again, we urge you to take action toward ensuring equitable vaccine access for some of our most vulnerable residents by:

- 1. Adding dependent seniors and caregivers in home-based or family-based care as part of group 1a or as a priority sub-group in 1b so that our elders and caregivers can access vaccines as soon as possible and prevent infections.***
- 2. Partner with and fund community-based organizations in cultural communities, such as community health clinics, to serve as vaccine access points for elders in home care.***

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(see undersigned below)

Community Organizations

Access to Our Community (ATOC), Mohamed Jama, Executive Director
African American Health Board
African Leaders Health Board, Tina Abdul Aziz
Aging with Pride HealthyGen Center, Alisa Tirado Strayer, Center Manager
Asian Pacific Directors Coalition (APDC), Michael Itti and Erin Okuno, Co-Chairs
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Washington (APIC-WA)
APIC-WA East King County Chapter, Lalita Uppala and Debbie Lacy, Co-Chairs
APIC-WA King County Chapter, Michael Byun, Chair
APIC-WA Snohomish County Chapter, Van Kuno, Chair
APIC-WA South Puget Sound Chapter, Brian Lock and Lin Crowley, Co-Chairs
APIC-WA Spokane Chapter, Rowena Pineda and Pui-Yan Lam, Co-Chairs
APICAT for Health, Elaine Ishihara, Executive Director
Chinese Radio Seattle, Xiaoyuan Su, Chief Executive Officer
Community Health Board Coalition Leadership Council
Filipino Community Health Board
Friends of Little Saigon, Quynh Pham, Executive Director
Helping Link, Minh Duc Nguyen, Executive Director
International Community Health Services (ICHS), Teresita Batayola, President and CEO
Khmer Health Board of King County, Samantha Yeun
Minidoka Pilgrimage Planning Committee, Erin Shigaki
Neighborcare Health, Meredith Vaughan, Interim CEO and Chief Operating Officer
Neighborhood House, Janice Deguchi, Executive Director
North American Post & Soy Source, Tomio Moriguchi, Publisher and Taxpayer
Seattle's Vietnamese Community Leadership Institute, Linh Thai
Seniors in Action Foundation, Nora Chan, Founding President
SNOW/PIHA NW, Siniva Driggers
Workforce Development Council of Seattle King County, Marie Kurose, Chief Executive Officer

Community Members

Zainab Al-Tameemi, President, Iraqi/Arab Health Board
Fariad Alani, Iraqi/Arab Health Board
Hector Aldaz, Community Member
Yahya Algarib, Iraqi Community Center of WA
Fanaye Amsalu, Ethiopian Community
Jack C. Chen, Community Member
La Verne S. Chen, Community Member
Katherine Cheng, Community Member
Stephanie Cirkovich, Esq.
Anne Xuan Clark, Community Member
Tsega Desta, Program Manager, Ethiopian Community Health Board
Michelle Di Miscio, Community Health Worker
Nanette Fok, Community Member
Roxanne Garcia, Program Manager, Housing and Street Outreach, Neighborcare Health

Muguette Guenneguez, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Seattle
Aaliyah Gupta, Community Member
Cynthia J Harris, Retired Administrator, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Angie Hinojos, Executive Director, Centro Cultural Mexicano
Kathy Ho, Community Member
Dieu-Hien Hoang, RN, Vietnamese Health Board
Katie Hong, Community Member
Linh Huynh, Vietnamese Health Board
Rituja Indapure, Community Member
Carlos Jimenez, Chair, Centro Cultural Mexicano
Aaron Johnson, Health Board and Family Advocacy Program Manager, Congolese Integration Network (CIN)
Manami Kano, Philanthropic Consultant and Concerned Community Member
Bereket Kiros, Coalition of Immigrants, Refugees & Communities of Color (CIRCC) and COVID-19 Community Alliance, Washington Africa Media Association
Susan Kunimatsu, Community Member
Kenneth Lo, Community Member
Michelle Lo, Community Member
Kristina Logsdon, Community Member
Fo-Ching Lu, President, Sheng-Yen Lu Foundation (SYL Foundation)
Kim Lundgreen, Vietnamese Health Board
Mustafa Mohammed, MPH, MBCHB, AAC, Vice President, Iraqi/Arab Health Board
Diem Nguyen, Vietnamese Health Board
Lan T. Nguyen, Vietnamese Health Board
Van Nguyen, DPH, Vietnamese Health Board
Quynh Pham, Community Member
Ka'imi A. Sinclair, PhD, MPH, Co-Director, Partnerships for Native Health, Washington State University
Sarya Sos, Cham Health Board
Brian Surratt, Community Member
Brad Tong, Community Member
Sarah Tran, Community Consultant
Michelle Tran RN, FNP, Vietnamese Health Board
Tram Tu, Family Caregiver
Tri Tu, Family Caregiver
Trang Tu, Family Caregiver
Lalita Uppala, Executive Director, India Association of Western Washington (IAWW)
Friendly Vang-Johnson, Community Member
Wendy Watanabe, Racial Justice Advocate
Michael Woo, Community Member

CC:

U.S. Representative Pramila Jayapal
Washington State Senator Mona Das
Washington State Senator Manka Dhingra
Washington State Senator Bob Hasegawa
Washington State Senator Joe Nguyen
Washington State Senator Rebecca Saldana
Washington State Representative Mia Gregerson
Washington State Representative Eric Pettigrew
Washington State Representative Cindy Ryu
Washington State Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos
Washington State Representative Vandana Slatter
Washington State Representative My-Linh Thai
Dow Constantine, King County Executive
Keith Phillips, Executive Director of Policy, Office of the Governor
Amber Leaders, Senior Policy Advisor for Behavioral Health, Aging and Disability, Office of the Governor
Molly Voris, Senior Policy Advisor for Public Health and Health Care, Office of the Governor
RaShelle Davis, Senior Policy Advisor for Civil Rights and Human Rights, Office of the Governor
Michele Roberts, Assistant Secretary, Washington State Department of Health
Paj Nandi, Director of Community Relations & Equity, Washington State Department of Health
Mary Huynh, Deputy Director and Co-Lead for COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation and Prioritization, Washington State Department of Health
SheAnne Allen, COVID-19 Vaccine Director and Co-Lead for COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation and Prioritization, Washington State Department of Health
Christy Hoff, Manager, Washington Health Disparities Council
Dr. Benjamin Danielson, Chair, Washington Health Disparities Council
Toshiko Hasegawa, Executive Director, Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
Ed Prince, Executive Director, Washington State Commission on African American Affairs
Maria Siguenza, Executive Director, Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs
Regina Malveaux, Executive Director, Washington Women's Commission
Patty Hayes, Director, Public Health Seattle King County
Matias Valenzuela, Director of Equity, Public Health Seattle King County
Kirsten Wysen, Staff Lead, Pandemic and Race Community Advisory Group, Public Health Seattle King County
Jeffrey Duchin, Public Health Officer, Public Health Seattle King County
Ingrid Ulrey, Policy Director, Public Health Seattle King County
Cathy Knight, Director, City of Seattle Aging and Disability Services
Dick Woo, City of Seattle Aging and Disability Advisory Council
Marcus Harrison Green, Founder and Publisher, South Seattle Emerald
Julie Pham, Co-Owner, Northwest Vietnamese News
Naomi Ishisaka, Assistant Managing Editor for Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Development
Jill Wasberg, Editor, International Examiner

Assunta Ng, Publisher, Northwest Asian Weekly and Seattle Chinese Post
Jim Wilgus, Executive Director, Alzheimer's Association, Washington State Chapter

ⁱ Family Caregiver Alliance. "Caregiver Statistics: Demographics." <https://www.caregiver.org/caregiver-statistics-demographics>. Rote, Sunshine M., PhD; Jacqueline L. Angel, PhD; Heehyul Moon, PhD; and Kyriakos Markides, PhD; and J Jill Sutor, PhD, Decision Editor. "Caregiving Across Diverse Populations: New Evidence from the National Study of Caregiving and Hispanic EPESE." May 2019.

ⁱⁱ The National Asian Pacific Center on Aging. <https://www.napca.org/impact-areas/family-caregiving/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Rote, Sunshine M., PhD; Jacqueline L. Angel, PhD; Heehyul Moon, PhD; and Kyriakos Markides, PhD; and J Jill Sutor, PhD, Decision Editor. "Caregiving Across Diverse Populations: New Evidence from the National Study of Caregiving and Hispanic EPESE." May 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6733633/>

^{iv} National Alliance on Caregiving and AARP. "Caregiving in the U.S. 2020" Report. <https://www.caregiving.org/caregiving-in-the-us-2020/>

^v "Cultural Diversity and Caregiving." American Psychological Association.

<https://www.apa.org/pi/about/publications/caregivers/faq/cultural-diversity>. Rote, Sunshine M., PhD; Jacqueline L. Angel, PhD; Heehyul Moon, PhD; and Kyriakos Markides, PhD; and J Jill Sutor, PhD, Decision Editor. "Caregiving Across Diverse Populations: New Evidence from the National Study of Caregiving and Hispanic EPESE." May 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6733633/>

^{vi} Sun, Lena H. and Isaac Stanley-Becker. "Front-line essential workers and adults 75 and over should be next to get the coronavirus vaccine, a CDC advisory group says." The Washington Post. 12/20/20.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/12/20/covid-vaccine-front-line-workers/>

^{vii} Eisenberg, Richard. "Caregiving in America: The Strain, The Pain, the Emotional Drain." Forbes. 5/14/20. Diverse Elders Coalition. <https://www.diverseelders.org/covid-19/>

^{viii} Rote, Sunshine M., PhD; Jacqueline L. Angel, PhD; Heehyul Moon, PhD; and Kyriakos Markides, PhD; and J Jill Sutor, PhD, Decision Editor. "Caregiving Across Diverse Populations: New Evidence from the National Study of Caregiving and Hispanic EPESE." May 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6733633/>
Ramachandran, Vignesh. "South Asian, Chinese New Yorkers among the hardest hit by Covid, study shows." NBC News. 12/17/20. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/south-asian-chinese-new-yorkers-among-hardest-hit-covid-study-n1251457>