



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH

March 11, 2021

The Honorable Stanley Saylor
245 Main Capitol Bldg.
PO Box 202094
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2094

The Honorable Matthew Bradford
512E Main Capitol Bldg.
PO Box 202070
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2070

Dear Chairman Saylor and Chairman Bradford,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the House Appropriations Committee to discuss the Governor’s proposed 2021-2022 Fiscal Year Budget for the Department of Health. We appreciate your committee’s engagement on the issues important to those we mutually serve. As discussed, below are responses to questions posed by committee members during the hearing.

Representative O’Neal requested information on the amount of COVID-19 vaccine allocated by the Department to the Federal Pharmacy Partnership program to complete the mission of vaccinating residents and staff of long-term care facilities. Below are the allocations to the program from week to week:

- Federal Pharmacy Partnership Allocations

	<u>1st dose</u>	<u>2nd dose</u>
○ 12/20	56%	n/a
○ 12/27	43%	n/a
○ 1/3	56%	56%
○ 1/17	56%	43%
○ 1/24	63%	56%
○ 1/31	63%	64%

Finally, during the week of February 7th, 26,325 first doses and 25,350 second doses were reallocated from the Federal Pharmacy Partnership’s program to be circulated back into Pennsylvania’s overall allocation as CVS and Walgreens had ample vaccine to complete their mission.

Representative Bullock requested information on funding for Hepatitis testing and treatment. The Department applied for and received additional Hepatitis A vaccine through the CDC. The Department administers vaccinations at the State Health Centers to at-risk populations and close contacts of Hepatitis A cases. As mentioned at the hearing, we receive a grant specific to Hepatitis C, the most recent of which was for \$265,000. In addition, \$1 million of our State Opioid Response subgrant from the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs and approximately \$549,000 of our state AIDS funding is identified to increase capacity for diagnostic and routine screening for both HIV and viral hepatitis in substance use treatment facilities.

Representative Schroeder requested the dates when various iterations of the vaccine plan were released to the public, estimates for individuals in the original Phase 1A grouping, how many people were vaccinated as of January 19th, and how much advance notice providers were given on the expansion of 1A. The dates of the Initial Interim Vaccination Plan, and each update, are listed below:

- Version 1 released on 10/23/2020
 - Version 2 released on 11/19/2020
 - Version 3 released on 12/11/2020
 - Version 4 released on 1/8/2021
 - Version 5 released on 1/19/2021
 - Version 6 released on 3/3/2021
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- What was the estimated number of individuals in original Phase 1A - prior to the addition of those age 65 and older; those 16-64 years of age with a chronic condition?
 - According to the federal vaccine data system, Tiberius, there were an estimated 827,317 health care workers. In addition, there were an estimated 336,375 staff and residents eligible within long-term care settings.

 - How many were vaccinated as of January 19th?
 - Per COVID-19 vaccinations reported to PA State Immunization Information System (PA-SIIS), the Department's immunization registry, the report for January 19th is as follows:
 - Total Vaccines Administered: 477,929
 - Persons Partially Covered: 340,947
 - Persons Fully Covered: 68,491

 - How much advance notice did the department give providers for Phase 1A expansion (age 65 and older/ages 16-64 with chronic conditions)?
 - Providers were notified of the expansion on the morning of the press conference announcement.

Representative Owlett requested information on the progress to vaccinate skilled nursing facilities who did not participate in the Federal Pharmacy Partnership. In total, 89 sites opted out of the Federal Pharmacy Partnership. Of those 89 sites, 65 have been matched with a CVS. Our vaccine team has been coordinating with the other 24 sites through Giant Pharmacies and the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists to vaccinate this population.

Chairwoman Rapp noted four abortions performed on young girls under the age of 12 as highlighted in Pennsylvania's Abortion Report and asked what follow up activities occur from the Department regarding these types of cases. Specifically, to our follow up in these instances, our licensure survey process ensures that we are reviewing medical records for patients under the age of 18 for parental consent.

Chairwoman Rapp also requested information on how the public can gain access to the quarterly reports required by the PA Abortion Control Act, housed at the State Library which has been closed to the public due to the pandemic. During the closure of the State Library, individuals may request access to these the reports by emailing:

RA-DHVITALSTATISTICS@pa.gov

Representative Amen Brown requested how much funding is allocated to the Department to address gun violence. The Department's efforts relate to all violence and injury prevention funding on a whole, not specifically to gun violence. For context, in 1996, Congress passed the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Bill, which included a provision known as the Dickey Amendment. This amendment effectively prohibited the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from using federal funds to study gun violence.

As a result, funding the Department receives from the CDC may not be used, in whole or in part, to advocate or promote gun control. The Department receives an annual grant from the CDC for the National Violent Death Reporting System for approximately \$463,000. The Department has budgeted approximately \$2.7 million in the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant for Safe and Healthy Communities, Violence and Injury Prevention and the sexual violence prevention and education mandate.

In addition, the Department receives a grant from the CDC for Sexual Violence Prevention in the amount of \$1.2 million. The Department also receives a subgrant from the Department of Transportation for approximately \$144,000 for vehicle safety assessment. Finally, state General Government Operations funding of \$275,000 is used to support the Division of Violence Prevention and, in 2020-21, a total of \$460,000 was appropriated for Trauma Prevention as part of the budget negotiation process.

Representative Amen Brown also requested information as to why 33 County Medical Examiners and 53 law enforcement agencies are not providing the same level of information into the PA Violent Death Reporting System (PAVDRS) as we receive from other entities.

To clarify, we are not receiving data from every law enforcement agency within those 14 counties. There are over 1,100 law enforcement agencies in Pennsylvania, and we are receiving

police reports for approximately 29% of our cases. There are numerous reasons we may not be receiving data from coroners, medical examiners, and law enforcement. For example, we have participation issues. Some entities may be enrolled in the PAVDRS; however, all may not be providing a full breadth of information needed. Further, there is no state or federal mandate to participate with PAVDRS. Some reporting entities may have challenges with having appropriate staff bandwidth to provide adequate reporting, while also receiving and fielding multiple data requests and requirements in other areas.

To address these issues, we have worked to provide ongoing outreach and education on current and potential data providers and worked with law enforcement to expand participation and partnerships, while also working to remove barriers to reporting.

Representative Rothman requested a copy of the prior order requiring 10% of vaccine received to be designated to non-hospital affiliated healthcare personnel to outside of system providers. A copy of the order is attached with our correspondence and the link to the order can be found below:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Vaccination%20of%20Community%20Health%20Care%20Providers.pdf>

Representative Warner asked when the governor was first notified of the potential of a COVID-19 vaccine being available. While there were potential indications of vaccine availability, the viability of a safe and effective vaccine was unsure. However, we first received information from the federal government providing a template for a vaccination plan on September 21, 2020, which indicated that the possibility of a safe and effective vaccine being available was likely. Accordingly, the Department drafted and released Version 1 of Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan on October 23, 2020. It has been updated and since re-published five times. A copy of the most current plan is attached with this correspondence.

Representative Topper requested a copy of the Wolf Administration's response to the U.S. Department of Justice inquiry into Pennsylvania's COVID-19 response in long-term care facilities. Unfortunately, the Department cannot provide a copy of the letter to the Department of Justice as the Department of Justice has not yet indicated that it has closed the investigation.

Representative Zimmerman asked if the Department keeps records of correspondence with consultants or advisors. The Department retains records in accordance with records retention policies and provides any public records as required by the Right-to-Know Law.

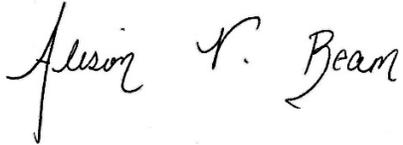
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Thank you again your questions and the opportunity to appear before the committee. Please feel free to contact the Department's legislative director, Dave Toth, at datoth@pa.gov if we can assist with any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alison V. Beam". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Alison V. Beam

Acting Secretary of Health