



**Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams before the Joint Hearing of the Committee on Health and the Committee on Hospitals  
January 12, 2021**

I would like to thank Chair of the Committee on Hospitals, Carlina Rivera, and Chair of the Committee on Health, Mark Levine, for inviting me to testify today. Since the first cases of COVID-19 were diagnosed a year ago, the goal has been to develop and distribute a vaccine. Over that same time period, we have seen the damage that the lack of clear information from government officials and others can do. We have also seen the effects of inequity in testing and PPE distribution. These facts make it all the more important that New York City has a clear, equitable, and transparent plan for vaccine distribution. Unfortunately, that has not been the case.

In the weeks since the vaccines were released, cases and deaths have continued to rise. And yet, we still do not have a clear, equitable, and transparent distribution plan. Instead, we have intergovernmental finger-pointing and vaccines sitting in wait. New York has been economically and emotionally devastated by this pandemic. We must do better to honor the sacrifices we have all made over the past year.

To start, we must have a real-time demographic data vaccination reporting system to track test positivity rates, death rates, and hospitalizations so that we do not see the same disparities that we saw in testing. In addition to tracking, and the steps that have already been taking in terms of a hotline and the mobilization of volunteers, there remain several steps we must take to improve the distribution of vaccines in New York City.

1. The State must expand eligibility now to speed up vaccination implementation, using criteria that gets the first dose to the New Yorkers most likely to contract or transmit the virus. That criteria should include:
  - Non-health care essential workers such as workers in high-risk industries, for example home health care, food delivery, supermarket, and transit workers
  - New Yorkers with medical conditions that make them susceptible to the virus
  - Residents of the most impacted ZIP codes
  - New Yorkers over the age of 65 (as per updated Centers for Disease Control guidance as of January 12, 2021)
2. The New York State Department of Health (DOH) should create a transparent three-tier color-coded system to define each level of eligibility for those who still need to receive vaccines:

- Red – People with the highest level of need, such as frontline workers and first responders
  - Yellow – All of the red group, plus the ZIP codes most impacted by the virus, those with medical conditions that make them susceptible, those in high-risk industries, and all New Yorkers over 75
  - Green – All of the red and yellow groups, plus all in the public who have not already been vaccinated
  - Regardless, of tiered status, the City and State should ensure that all doses are used each day by creating an open call for residents when the day’s appointments are complete
3. To ensure immigrants and other at-risk communities who are eligible get connected with the vaccination program, the City and State must work with advocacy organizations and those groups on the ground that can help them prove eligibility and to build the queue for the next round of dosages. For example, the City and State should work with groups such as the Biking Public Project to ensure delivery workers are educated and informed about eligibility.
  4. To set up the distribution hubs, the City must immediately provide a map of the 250 locations it says will be used so that we can ensure they can cover the most at-risk populations. These locations should be open 24 hours a day and include:
    - Schools without student population currently doing in-person learning
    - Schoolyards
    - Houses of worship
    - Senior centers

At my request, Council Member I. Daneek Miller is introducing a resolution to call on the State to implement the outstanding items in our seven-point plan. I urge the City Council members of this committee to co-sponsor and send a message to Albany that we must act now with clear-cut communication, guidance, and urgency.

New York City is resilient, and we must not waste the precious resource of vaccines, but we need a plan that provides clarity and transparency to help us get through this crisis. Thank you.