



Latino Policy & Politics Initiative

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MEDIA CONTACT

Lys Mendez

E: lppipress@luskin.ucla.edu

P: 951-205-4676

UCLA LATINO POLICY AND POLITICS STATEMENT FROM LATINO LEADERS ON PRIORITIZING HARDEST-HIT COMMUNITIES FOR VACCINE ACCESS

The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative and a group of Latino leaders from across California issued the following statements in response to the state's updated [vaccine equity metric](#) to target 40 percent of COVID-19 vaccine doses to the hardest-hit communities in the lowest quartile of the [Healthy Places Index \(HPI\)](#).

Sonja Diaz, founding director of the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (Los Angeles, California):

“On February 11th, a group of [70 Latino leaders and allies from across the state](#) issued a call to action to Governor Gavin Newsom asking for an equitable vaccine distribution process. We called for a plan that prioritizes communities of color that are getting infected largely due to their roles as essential workers. Communities of color are keeping the economy afloat, and prioritizing them is not only the right thing to do, but an economic imperative. Vaccinations should go to those who have no choice but continue working everyday to keep a roof over their head and food on the table during this devastating pandemic. The state's new approach is the right step to stop the bleeding and affirm that Californians of color are not collateral damage but the catalysts to recovery. California has a responsibility to those communities to get them help first and fast.”

Dr. Jeffrey Reynoso, Executive Director, Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (Sacramento, California):

“COVID-19 has decimated the Latinx community and yet, they have been largely left behind in relief and recovery efforts, from testing to vaccine access. Latinos represent only 17% of those receiving the vaccine to date, far below its 39% share of the state’s population, making it clear that more needs to be done. Governor Newsom’s decision to double the vaccine allotment to the hardest hit communities—which will allocate more vaccines in places like the Central Valley and Los Angeles County—is a step in the right direction. To achieve true health equity, the state should increase investments in trusted community health centers and community organizations to ensure that the vaccine is accessible to our communities. Doing so will not only protect Latinx households, but safely accelerate California’s economic reopening.”

Chris Iglesias, CEO, The Unity Council (Oakland, California):

“Governor Newsom is stepping in to move Black and Brown communities to the front of the line during a pandemic that has put them further behind. Shifting the state’s vaccine distribution from wealthy communities to our working poor, many which are essential workers, is critical to protecting the very communities that have kept California afloat during a global pandemic and economic recession. These are the Californians who have been hammered by failed systems, and it's time that we create a fair playing field to not only survive COVID-19 but thrive in recovery.”

Carmela Castellano-Garcia, President & CEO, California Primary Care Association (Sacramento, CA)

“Communities of color are much younger in age than non-Hispanic whites, and the state’s previous age-based criteria for vaccine access put them at a disadvantage. Governor Newsom’s vaccine equity plan takes vaccines directly to these frontline communities by not only redirecting allotments, but by accelerating access through partnerships with trusted messengers, including the state’s robust community health centers, and through culturally-competent investments in appointment assistance for digitally and medically underserved Californians.”

Inez González Perezchica, Executive Director, MANA de San Diego (San Diego, CA)

“For far too long, Latinas have had to navigate unequal systems to access social mobility and a better future for their loved ones. COVID-19 has set Latinas back, just as they were fueling small

business growth and moving closer to equitable representation in our higher education systems. Governor Newsom's decision to prioritize these households by allocating vaccines to hard-hit Latino neighborhoods will not only save lives, but it will start to repave a path toward economic opportunity for the very Californians who will be central to our future."

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ABOUT UCLA LATINO POLICY AND POLITICS INITIATIVE

The UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunity for all Americans.