



JOHN LEMONDES
Assemblyman
126th District

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March 17, 2021

Dr. Howard Zucker, Commissioner
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12237

Re: Agricultural Worker COVID-19 Vaccination Prioritization

Dear Commissioner Zucker:

Throughout the course of this pandemic, a significant number of workplaces and their workers have been asked to deal with tremendous, unusual challenges. Where the state has tried to support them is noble, but on the eve of a full recovery thanks to the vaccine, I believe there is still one group being left out. Our agricultural workers, both on farms and in working with grocery stores and produce sellers, are still ineligible for COVID-19 vaccines at this time. I believe we must reconsider that.

Agricultural workers and the bounties they provide us have kept us going through the pandemic, with very little financial or physical support from the state to show for it. In New York alone, our producers account for an enormous export business between states, across the country, and around the world. Our farmers and their workers haven't taken a day off or had the luxury to work from home throughout this pandemic. They've put themselves and their families on the line to keep New Yorkers fed. We cannot continue to ignore their needs when they are so intrinsically tied to our own.

The Farm Bureau has previously called on your office to reconsider the applicability of agricultural workers to receive the vaccine in this early phase, and I want to support their voices and their fight for the vaccine with this letter to you. With so much of New York's survivability riding on the success of our farmers, I believe it is high time to get them the vaccine so they can work safely. I eagerly anticipate your response and look forward to speaking with you further on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

John Lemondes
Member of Assembly
126th District