



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

February 17, 2021

WI Department of Health Services  
Office of the Secretary  
Interim Secretary Karen Timberlake

Dear Secretary Timberlake,

I write to express concern about the accessibility of the COVID-19 vaccination on behalf of my constituents of the 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. As you know, this was a major topic of our recent discussion and while I applaud the steps that you are taking, I know that more can be done and wanted to pass onto you one new suggestion for increasing access to these critical vaccines for all.

As you are aware, over 95,000 Americans, including 1,037 Wisconsinites, lost their lives to COVID-19 in January 2021 alone. I share frustrations about the difficulty that has reigned as states have tried to allocate and distribute these vaccines, without much federal support or leadership from the previous administration. Further, I appreciate your efforts and those of DHS to combat this deadly disease, with roughly 999,591 vaccines having been administered in Wisconsin.

I am aware that DHS began, on February 12, 2021, to distribute COVID-19 vaccinations via a partnership with Walgreens locations throughout Wisconsin with a focus on underserved areas to complete Phase 1b.

While I applaud this endeavor, it has come to my attention that individuals from outside the neighborhoods in which these pharmacies are located have been making lengthy trips to obtain vaccination appointments in Milwaukee Walgreens locations, ahead of vulnerable neighborhood residents that this initiative was intended to reach. To be specific, a WISN-12 news article, published February 12, 2021, detailed an account of a woman who drove thirty to forty minutes from Hubertus, WI to Walgreens on 27<sup>th</sup> and North Avenue for her vaccine.<sup>1</sup>

I acknowledge the need for the widespread disbursement of the vaccines so that people can protect themselves and resume regular activities; however, if such reports of vaccine tourism are true, this new effort will not fulfill its goal of closing the inequities in vaccine administration that we have seen so far in Wisconsin and across our nation. A solution I would like you to consider is requiring that Walgreens locations participating in this endeavor use their automatic prescription refill reminder system to notify nearby residents

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wisn.com/article/walgreens-begins-giving-covid-19-vaccines/35492596>

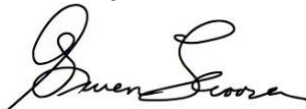
of the vaccines availability and to help schedule appointments. Using this existing tool will help ensure that those who regularly use these locations for their medical needs are prioritized in the vaccine process, instead of others who may travel long distances to jump in line.

If a vaccinating Walgreens, stationed in an undeserved targeted area, were to handle the outreach to current customers, episodes like the one detailed above would be fewer, and I suspect the percentage of vaccinated African Americans, Hispanic Americans and other minorities would increase. Further, I believe automated calls from Walgreens would prove more than beneficial to my constituents, many of whom may not have access or reliable access to a computer or internet and may not be aware of the Milwaukee Health Department phone line.

We must provide meaningful resources to those hardest hit by the coronavirus and ensure those resources are actually accessible. It's not enough to put the vaccine in a store located in the 53208 zip-code. We need to make sure it makes it into the arms of 53208 residents as part of a real commitment to focusing on underserved populations.

I thank you for the meeting to discuss these issues last week. However, I again want to impress upon you the need for deliberate intentionality and pursuing all avenues to help ensure that communities of color have equal access to these critical vaccines. As you continue to develop and improve the distribution of vaccines in our great state, I ask that you take this into consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gwen Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gwen" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Moore".

Gwen Moore  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

CC: Andrew Hoyer-Booth, DHS Legislative Director