

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
301 7th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and  
Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

BY ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Becerra:

Thank you for your commitment to an all-of-government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We write to highlight concerns about the vaccine distribution process in Florida. Current proof of residency requirements present a serious obstacle to vaccination among undocumented immigrant and migrant and seasonal farmworker communities. It is our understanding that federally-supported sites currently are requiring documentation consistent with the Governor's Executive Order and Florida Surgeon General's advisory. We ask that you consider ending residency requirements for vaccination at federally-supported sites as soon as possible, which will help to expedite our progress toward a robust return to normal and better protect the health and safety of everyone who calls Florida, and America, home.

In January, Florida Surgeon General Scott Rivkees issued an advisory requiring individuals who seek vaccination to show a Florida identification card to prove that they live in the state. For those who do not have a Florida ID, certain official documents could be used instead, such as bank account statements or utility bills, among others. This has unfortunately created an obstacle for the approximately 775,000 undocumented immigrants and 150,000 to 200,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families living in Florida who are unlikely to have the necessary identification. Moreover, reports indicate that many of these individuals struggle to collect alternative documentation, since alternative documentation is at times dependent on having state identification.

Undocumented immigrants and migrant and seasonal farmworkers have been among the most vulnerable and hardest-hit by COVID-19 and they are valued members of our communities. While we appreciated concerns about vaccine tourism early in the vaccine rollout, Florida has now opened eligibility to all adults, weeks ahead of President Biden's April 19<sup>th</sup> goal. At this stage, proof of residency is more likely to exacerbate problems with equity, access, and public health by denying otherwise-eligible individuals from receiving the COVID-19 shot. The nearly 1 million immigrants and migrant workers across our state that have reportedly struggled to get a dose, some after repeated attempts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Madan, Monique. Undocumented immigrants in Florida getting shut out of access to COVID-19 vaccine, Miami Herald, Apr. 8, 2021, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article250466306.html>.

Undocumented immigrants are likely to live in communities where COVID-19 outcomes are more severe and work in jobs that make social distancing difficult. Further, because migrant farmworkers and their families travel to work in Florida, they may be increasing the spread of the virus across state lines. These individuals live in, work in, and interact in our communities, and without proper access to vaccines, these populations may exacerbate community spread, which affects all Floridians, and can impact our health system.

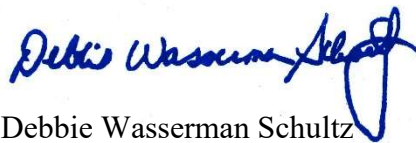
Therefore, we urge your administration to immediately end proof of residency requirements at federally-supported vaccine sites and continue to support pop-up vaccination sites in under-resourced communities. Additionally, we ask that you strongly encourage Governor DeSantis to revise proof of residency for state- and county-run sites to expand access to vaccines for undocumented immigrants and migrant workers. The need to vaccinate as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, is becoming even more dire as highly transmissible variants spread rapidly across the state.

At a time when Florida remains the state with the highest confirmed variant cases and is experiencing another uptick of cases, access to vaccines for vulnerable communities is of paramount importance. Now that access to a vaccine is available to everyone over 18 years of age in most states, proof of residency should no longer be required at federal vaccine sites in Florida or any other state. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We are prepared to assist however we can to improve access to the COVID-19 vaccine to everyone who calls Florida home.

Sincerely,



Ted Deutch  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Lois Frankel  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Darren Soto  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS