



NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

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January 7, 2021

The Honorable Phil D. Murphy
Post Office Box 001
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Re: COVID-19 Vaccines For Legal Workers

Dear Governor Murphy:

As the leader of the New Jersey State Bar Association, the only organization that represents all attorneys in our State, please accept my thanks to you and your administration for your work in managing the crisis the COVID-19 pandemic has caused across the state. We are encouraged that a vaccine is now available and is being administered to front-line workers.

As you are aware, the pandemic has effectively closed courthouses across New Jersey, creating an access to justice issue for many of our residents, especially those who are indigent. Many matters are being heard in the virtual space, but not everything can be addressed in this new format. Even more, we have expressed significant concerns that not everyone has the technology needed to effectively participate. People who have been arrested are languishing in jail longer as criminal trials have not been able to proceed. Tens of thousands of landlord and tenant matters are on hold, creating what experts believe will be a severe housing crisis in the future. Municipal courts are not hearing in-person matters and most civil matters are stagnant. People turn to our courts every day to resolve disputes and seek justice, and while the Judiciary is to be commended for keeping our judicial system operating, opening our courthouses must be a priority for justice to be fully served. Beyond opening the courthouses, there are significant numbers of attorneys who serve critical needs in our communities that are essential to people's lives and our state's economy. To meet those needs, lawyers need to be able to meet freely in person with clients in jails or in their offices, and to attend hearings and other legal proceedings without fear of getting or spreading the virus.

Given that, I am writing to urge you to include attorneys and the staff that support them as essential workers who perform duties across our state infrastructure. The CDC defines essential workers as those who "perform duties across critical infrastructure sectors and maintain services and functions that U.S. citizens depend on daily." In its Updated Interim Recommendation for Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine, issued on December 22, 2020, the CDC

included “legal” as a category of essential workers eligible for vaccination in Tier 1c. When we are able to reopen courthouses to in-person proceedings, the backlog of cases that will need to be heard will be unprecedented. Lawyers and their support teams in the larger legal community will be integral to ensuring getting the legal rights and remedies of our citizens addressed, and, therefore, should be included in the vaccine schedule at the earliest possible time.

Now is the time to vaccinate those in the legal community who will help open the doors to the courthouse and justice system for our residents. We are willing to assist the State in vaccine administration in any way that we can, including offering space in the Law Center’s large auditorium as a vaccination site.

Thank you again for all that you and your administration has done thus far to manage this challenge and for considering our request.

Very truly yours,



Kimberly A. Yonta
President

cc: Hon. Stuart Rabner, Chief Justice, New Jersey Supreme Court
Hon. Stephen M. Sweeney, Senate President
Hon. Craig Coughlin, Assembly Speaker
Parimal Garg, Esq., Chief Counsel
Angela Scheck, NJSBA Executive Director