

Duckworth Joins Booker, 15 Democratic Senators in Urging Robust Funding for State and Local Governments to Distribute COVID-19 Vaccine

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and 15 of their Democratic Senate colleagues in urging Congressional leaders to provide robust funding to ensure the swift distribution of COVID-19 vaccines as a part of any upcoming legislation to address the pandemic.

“For months, as states, territories, Indian Tribes, and other localities have been responding to COVID-19 and working tirelessly to keep their residents safe, they have also been preparing to undertake one of the largest vaccination efforts in our nation’s history,” the lawmakers wrote in a letter sent today to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Speaker Pelosi and

Minority Leader McCarthy. To accomplish this, jurisdictions must recruit and train thousands of health care workers, modernize data systems and registries, stand up vaccination sites, develop communications and educational materials, and build and support the infrastructure needed to distribute multiple types and doses of COVID-19 vaccines, among other activities.”

“To ensure that jurisdictions throughout the country are well-positioned to immediately, efficiently, and equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccines as they become available, we respectfully request that any upcoming legislation to address the pandemic include robust funding for COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts,” the lawmakers concluded.

With the recent news of at least one COVID-19 vaccine possibly being available to be distributed within the next month, many state and local governments lack the proper funding that is needed to distribute the vaccine. According to a [recent letter](#) sent by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) to congressional leaders, a minimum of \$8.4 billion is needed to distribute COVID-19 vaccines nationwide. Some experts even estimated that \$10 billion is required in order to fund [community vaccination clinics](#) alone.

Joining Duckworth and Booker in sending the letter were U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tom Carper (D-DE), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Gary Peters (D-MI), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Tina Smith (D-MN), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

A full copy of the letter can be found [here](#) and below:

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

As Congress continues to work on legislation to address the COVID-19 pandemic, we request that you include robust funding for COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts. With at least one COVID-19 vaccine candidate likely to be available before or around the new year, this funding is urgently needed to ensure that Americans have swift access to these vaccines.

For months, as states, territories, Indian Tribes, and other localities have been responding to COVID-19 and working tirelessly to keep their residents safe, they have also been preparing to undertake one of the largest vaccination efforts in our nation’s history. To accomplish this, jurisdictions must recruit and train thousands of health care

workers, modernize data systems and registries, stand up vaccination sites, develop communications and educational materials, and build and support the infrastructure needed to distribute multiple types and doses of COVID-19 vaccines, among other activities.¹ In addition to facilitating vaccine distribution, these activities are also important for building vaccine confidence, particularly as recent data indicates that more than 40 percent of Americans would not be willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19.²

The Department of Health and Human Services intends to cover many of the costs associated with COVID-19 vaccines, including the vaccines themselves and ancillary supplies, during the public health emergency, and so far, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has distributed \$200 million to jurisdictions for COVID-19 vaccination efforts and plans to distribute an additional \$140 million, according to press reports.³ Jurisdictions need significant additional funding to successfully conduct the activities described above and in the interim COVID-19 vaccination plans that they submitted to the CDC last month.⁴ In September, CDC Director Robert Redfield acknowledged that the agency does not currently have the resources needed for vaccine distribution and that, “These jurisdictions are not going to be able to put these plans in place without resources.”⁵ Dedicated funding for COVID-19 vaccine distribution is especially critical now as jurisdictions are facing historic budget shortfalls amid the pandemic and funding for health departments had been inadequate even before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Public health experts have estimated that a bare minimum of \$8.4 billion is needed for COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts. This includes \$3 billion for workforce training and recruitment; \$1.2 billion for cold chain management; \$1 billion for improvements to vaccination infrastructure; \$700 million for vaccine coverage, effectiveness, evaluation, and safety reporting; and \$500 million for communications efforts, including building vaccine confidence, combatting misinformation, and conducting outreach to priority populations.⁶ Other experts have estimated that \$10 billion is needed to fund community vaccination clinics alone.⁷

To ensure that jurisdictions throughout the country are well-positioned to immediately, efficiently, and equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccines as they become available, we respectfully request that any upcoming legislation to address the pandemic include robust funding for COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts. Thank you for your serious consideration of this request, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,