

**From:** Rep. Tim Moore <Tim.Moore@ncleg.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:29 PM  
**Subject:** Health Committee Oversight of Vaccine Distribution

Members,

Thank you for your service to North Carolina on the House Health Committee this session. I write with urgency to ask that you continue the General Assembly's oversight of vaccine distribution processes in North Carolina with a committee hearing as soon as possible.

Local health departments, including my own in Cleveland County, have expressed concerns that the shifting priorities of the Department of Health and Human Services are marginalizing rural communities where residents lack mobility, particularly among elderly populations. County leaders have complained of receiving conflicting information regarding distribution plans and the size of vaccine deliveries. Secretary Mandy Cohen apologized directly to county health departments for this lack of transparency and communication this week, but further action is needed.

It is not clear why DHHS did not direct local emergency management offices to activate existing protocols for crises such as this, which every county is required to develop and be prepared to follow. DHHS instead urged counties to develop maximum capacity plans to heighten the number of vaccines they could distribute with a large supply that never arrived. Further, our state is not utilizing existing availability for pharmacies to assist with administering large numbers of vaccines as they do with the flu shot, foregoing an opportunity to leverage critical healthcare infrastructure in this effort.

This inconsistency puts our local health departments in an impossible position, damaging the credibility of state and county officials with citizens who rely on them for critical information about this process. I hear concerns from county officials that they are given limited information from DHHS, but are then expected to dialogue directly with North Carolinians without any answers to their concerns.

The simplest example of this issue is that counties were expecting much larger allocations than they have received. Cleveland County's expected capacity was 2,500 doses per week, but they are now scheduled to receive between 300-500 doses weekly. This confusion conflicts with the administration's message at both the state and federal levels that eligible populations should make an appointment and get vaccinated as soon as possible. Residents are surprised to discover there are no appointments available, or that they have been cancelled, when they contact local health departments.

I also understand that DHHS will only be allocating roughly 84,000 of the 120,000 doses received each week directly to counties, while the other 36,000 are being reserved for the mega-sites distributions. This shift has surprised local officials, particularly in rural counties like mine, who are regularly running out of doses. Cleveland County, by example, expects to

distribute its total inventory of vaccines by the end of this week with zero doses remaining by Friday. Competition among providers to host large mega-site distributions should not interfere with the prioritization of meeting each county's capacity as soon as possible.

Significant concerns were also raised by healthcare institutions in our state this week with the changes to vaccine supply chain management implemented by DHHS. As DHHS has now announced further reforms to their protocols in response to those concerns, the work of the House Health Committee is vital to ensure their response does not further exacerbate an urban-rural divide.

Finally, we hear conflicting information from members of Congress in Washington D.C. that the state could receive as many as 254,000 doses per week, nearly double the estimates that DHHS has announced it anticipates. My staff is relying on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) dashboard to determine how many doses our state has actually received, as this information is conveyed on its platforms but not provided directly by DHHS.

To address these and other arising concerns, I urge the members and chairs of the House Health Committee to hold further oversight hearings regarding vaccine distributions in North Carolina as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Tim Moore  
Speaker of the House of Representatives