

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0309

January 22, 2021

Mr. Norris Cochran  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Cochran:

As you begin to take over the federal distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations, I want to draw your attention to our Arizona border communities which desperately need additional doses due to the large number of essential employees who work in Customs and Border Protection and the high traffic of visitors and workers from Mexico.

Currently, vaccines are distributed mostly based on resident population. However, while this model works in many parts of the country, it fails to recognize the unique challenges of border communities. Arizona's border communities are home to 5,000 Customs and Border Protection Patrol officers. These officers are essential workers and need to be vaccinated but despite being in the 1B population, they compete for scarce vaccine resources.

Additionally, approximately 14.1 million people have crossed the border in 2020, a number that is down because of COVID, but will surely rise once border crossing restrictions are removed. These visitors are essential to an Arizona economy which relies on Mexican shoppers, tourists, and workers for revenue; however, they also create additional demand on the medical resources of our border communities.

I was pleased to see that on January 6, 2021, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs began administering vaccines to Department of Homeland Security personnel through an interagency agreement. This has the potential to help reserve more vaccines from border community allotments for other eligible community members.

As you continue to determine vaccine allocation, I respectfully request you pay close attention to the unique challenges of our border communities and to consider providing more doses to these communities either through this partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs or in direct contract with the Department of Health and Human Services. I also request that the Department of Homeland Security coordinate on-site vaccination programs at field offices and ports of entry.

Sincerely,



Mark Kelly  
United States Senator