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COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
SOCIAL SECURITY
SELECT REVENUE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4319

December 15, 2020

John Hellerstedt, MD
Commissioner
Texas Department of State Health Services
PO Box 149347
Austin, Texas 78714-9347

Dear Dr. Hellerstedt,

I write today regarding Texas' COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan and the importance of rural hospitals accessing the vaccine as quickly as possible. As a Member of the House Committee on Ways and Means, Chair of the Rural and Underserved Communities Health Taskforce, and the Representative of Texas' 19th District, advocating for rural health access is one of my top priorities.

Let me start by acknowledging the unenviable challenge of establishing our state's vaccine distribution plan. I understand that you and the Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel are faced with many competing factors when deciding where to send these initial vaccine shipments.

That said, I want to emphasize the vital role rural hospitals play in West Texas and throughout our state. Rural hospitals throughout my district have shown incredible resilience over the past 9 months as they served our communities and cared for COVID patients. I appreciate the logistical considerations that played into rural hospitals' exclusion from the first round of vaccine distribution. However, as you develop plans for the next round of vaccine doses, I would implore you to work closely with the rural hospitals and allow them to show their ability to find innovative ways to care for their communities. I am constantly impressed with their resourcefulness and commitment to serving patients in rural America.

Again, thank you for your tireless work to help our citizens access the COVID vaccine. Operation Warp Speed is a historic endeavor that all Americans should be proud of, and I ask that you continue your work to ensure every Texan can benefit from its success.

Sincerely,



Jodey C. Arrington
Member of Congress

CC: Governor Greg Abbott