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Commissioner Judith M. Persichilli
Office of the Commissioner
Department of Health
State of New Jersey
55 N. Willow Street
Trenton, NJ 08608

Request to Prioritize Library Workers as Essential Workers in the Vaccine Rollout

We write to you on behalf of the New Jersey Library community and ask you to prioritize library workers as essential service providers in the vaccine rollout program.

Libraries serve as community anchors, and they have continued to serve as the cohesive glue that is binding their communities together, within a COVID-19 environment. Whether it is a public library, an academic library, a school library, or a special library, libraries are a place of refuge. Often during natural disasters, weather extremes, and pandemics, people are asked to find solutions at their libraries. Libraries build community.

Library workers pivoted to many creative service models following the corona virus pandemic. As such, they are in direct contact with the communities they serve. Just like our colleagues in education, library workers serve as knowledge conduits to students, pre-school kids, parents, seniors and the community at large.

Of consequence is the fact that the current pandemic magnified digital inequities among our citizens. Majority of New Jerseyans depend on their libraries for digital access and coaching to navigate digital resources. Library workers therefore are in close contact with the public on a daily basis.

We thrive on being able to provide access to information to the communities we serve. Delaying our priority ranking in the vaccine rollout further delays our ability to support our customers who are desperate to find that next job; or the parents and students who rely on us to make sense out of digital learning.

We ask you to please include library workers in the 1B category of the NJ vaccine rollout, along with our colleagues in education and other frontline workers.

Respectfully,

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cc: Dr. Deborah Cornavaca, Deputy Chief of Staff of Outreach.