



March 19, 2021

Mr. Larry Schwartz
Capitol Building
Executive Chamber
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

As a unified financial services industry, the New York Bankers Association (NYBA), the Independent Bankers Association of New York State (IBANYS) and the New York Credit Union Association (NYCUA) join in this letter to advocate for vaccine distribution to our public facing financial services employees working at member institutions across New York State. As of today, these essential workers have not been recognized for vaccine eligibility under the New York State Department of Health vaccine distribution plan. For the safety of our member institutions' employees, as well as the public they interact with daily, we respectfully request that these essential workers gain access to the vaccine as soon as possible, either through vaccination sites or through CDC approved workplace vaccination programs.

As providers of financial services, bank and credit union employees were early identified as part of the essential workforce, proving to be a critical part of infrastructure and economic frontlines. We have remained open, subject at times to certain state and local health orders, since the start of the pandemic- ensuring that both retail and business customers have access to personal finance and capital and the ability to complete financial transactions both in person and online.

Our employees have done tremendous work to keep the New York State economy running throughout this uncertain and unprecedented year. Through all of that time, banks and credit unions across the State have been working with New Yorkers to minimize the adverse economic effects of the pandemic and help each individual navigate complex financial situations. We have processed several rounds of critical PPP for small businesses and much needed stimulus funds for our neighbors. We have worked hard to continue to process untold numbers of mortgage applications and refinances, as well as forbearances for mortgages, car loans, and student loans. The instrumental work of our members within and for their communities over the course of the past year demonstrates their unwavering commitment to offering assistance in difficult times. Banks and credit unions have also worked tirelessly to

develop, implement and manage employee safety measures around COVID-19 along with safety measures for the public in their banking interactions.

In particular, public facing bank and credit union employees- rank and file community branch workers, despite fear for their own health and families- never stopped showing up, knowing that if they weren't there, the people who are the very life blood of our communities would not have access to the finances and capital they so desperately needed to keep the fabric of these communities together. We are proud to represent these often-overlooked frontline workers, who kept the financial system going in order to avoid near certain collapse in the State where COVID hit so early, so abruptly and so completely.

And we continue to be there. With the passage of the federal American Rescue Plan and the swift transfer of Economic Impact Payments and next, Child Tax Credit and other payments, our members are expecting in-person transactions in branches to increase over the next few weeks. It is critical that we protect these employees, as well as the public who will necessarily need to interact with them, in order to continue the progress of reopening our State.

The CDC recently issued guidance on implementing workplace COVID-19 vaccination programs. Many banks are prepared to implement such a program for their employees immediately, as flu vaccination programs have been successfully offered to their employees for many years. Allowing banks to take part in a program such as this would remove pressure from the larger distribution system. For the banking institutions without a vaccination program, we would respectfully request that the public facing essential service bank employees be part of the next expanded eligibility announcement.

NYBA, IBANYS and NYCUA respectfully request the immediate inclusion of these front facing bank and credit union essential workers within current vaccine eligibility guidelines, thereby allowing them to gain access as soon as possible, either through vaccination sites or through CDC approved workplace vaccination programs.

On behalf of our membership, we want to thank you for your leadership in guiding the State through this unprecedented year. We truly appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Clare M. Cusack
President & CEO,
New York Bankers Association

William J. Mellin
President & CEO,
New York Credit Union Association

John Witkowski
President & CEO,
Independent Bankers Association
of New York State

cc: Howard Zucker, Commissioner, New York State Department of Health
Linda A. Lacewell, Superintendent, New York State Department of Financial Services