



Office of Governor Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

January 21, 2021

To The Honorable Charlie Baker Governor of Massachusetts:

The Massachusetts Library Association (MLA), in our role as a leader and advocate for all types of libraries in Massachusetts, continues its advocacy to protect Library Workers and the communities that they serve, in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, Library Workers have risen to the call to support their communities on the front lines to provide to all members of the public critical in-person services such as: computer access and support; circulating technology and materials which are heavily relied on by students and educators; serving as printing and faxing destinations for people who are submitting unemployment claims; Covid-19 test results; applying for housing and food assistance programs; completing aid applications to save local businesses, and more. This critical work cannot be accomplished without the front-line Library Workers who are at high risk of contracting or unintentionally spreading Covid-19 as a result of their work.

Massachusetts Library Association affirms that Library Workers have a fundamental right to a safe work environment. This includes, but is not limited to, a Library or other work setting that minimizes an employee's environmental risk of exposure to Covid-19. This also includes reducing the instances of harm an employee may face because members of the public may not want to adhere to mandates protecting communities from a pandemic.

Recently, your office released the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Vaccine Distribution timeline and plan. With a limited supply of vaccinations being sent to our state from the Federal Government, MLA understands the priority of reaching health care workers and their patients through Phase 1. These individuals have a heightened risk of exposure and must be protected for the health of our communities.

Phase 2 of the Vaccine Distribution timeline names early education workers, K-12 workers, transit workers, grocery workers, utility workers, food and agriculture workers; and, restaurant and cafe workers as priority individuals to receive the vaccine. As trusted members of the community, Library Workers will be critical to promoting safety, transparency and equity around vaccine distribution. **MLA strongly recommends for Library Workers, who have been on the front-lines providing in-person services to the most vulnerable members of our communities, to be included with their fellow educators and critical community service workers, and named eligible to receive the Covid-19 vaccine in Phase 2 of the vaccine roll-out.**

It is well-documented how the Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted Massachusetts's most marginalized, underserved and disconnected communities. These same populations rely heavily on Libraries for access to reliable information and services. It is for these reasons that MLA strongly recommends expedited eligibility for vaccination for Library Workers.

Thank you for your consideration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nora Blake', is written over a white background.

Nora Blake
President, Massachusetts Library Association