



Janet Mills
Governor

Dr. Nirav Shah
Director, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Jeanne Labrew
Commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Todd Landry
Director for DHHS Office of Child and Family Services

Paul Saucier
Director for DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services:

Dear Governor Mills, Director Shah, Commissioner Labrew, Director Landry, and Director Saucier:

Representative Laurie Osher from Orono coordinated a letter which she submitted to both you Dr. Shah and Governor Mills requesting that family members living with people at risk for bad Covid outcomes (especially children at risk who are too young for the vaccine) be prioritized to be vaccinated.

Representative Osher is requesting family members of individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism, brain injury and other related conditions to be included in group 1a. While these conditions in and of themselves do not increase risk for poor outcomes from COVID-19, it is very common for these conditions to come with underlying conditions. These underlying conditions include but are not limited to: cardiac/heart defects and disease, obesity, diabetes, pulmonary disorders, sleep apnea, epilepsy, gastrointestinal disorders, and more. It has been well documented that all of these conditions put individuals at an increased risk for severe illness if they become sick with COVID-19.

For these families the fear of their children becoming infected by a family member living in their household is very real. Currently, they are facing the



tough decisions of taking a leave of absence from work and/or all virtual learning for other children, to reduce the risk of infection. While there is no arguing the pandemic has caused obstacles for all Mainers, like our adults in the higher risk groups, these families face the real risk of their child succumbing to COVID-19. Without this change, unless they are able to qualify within another group, these family members would fall in some of the last groups to be vaccinated, greatly delaying their ability to provide for their family while decreasing exposure risk.

We also note that, while Maine has done a good job reporting on a number of COVID-19 metrics, it has not integrated data about people with disabilities into its general reporting by Maine CDC, and it is unclear to us to what extent the data on disability has been analyzed. For example, it is clear that the incidence of COVID-19 among adults with disabilities in Maine who receive waiver services is much higher than among the general population. But is unclear what the COVID-19 metrics are on people living in the community, living with their families, participating in shared living, etc.

Representative Osher has worked to retain support from her fellow legislators. Our agencies have teamed together to offer our support as well as to garner support on behalf of all the families we represent. We felt it was important you all know the importance of moving these family members into group 1a so like all our other high at-risk communities these families can get the medical safety they deserve and need.

Cathy Dionne
Autism Society of Maine

Alan Cobo-Lewis
Center for Community Inclusion & Disability
Studies

Kim Moody
Disability Rights Maine

Kristine Binette
Epilepsy Foundation New England

Carrie Woodcock
Maine Parent Federation

Nancy Cronin
Maine Developmental Disabilities Council