

Santa Barbara County Food and Agriculture Clinic Consortium:

County of Santa Barbara, Public Health Department

County of Santa Barbara, Agriculture/Weights & Measures Department

Community Health Centers of the Central Coast

Dignity Health, Marian Regional Medical Center, Pacific Central Coast Health Centers

Grower-Shipper Association of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties

UnitedAg, Health & Wellness Center in partnership with Elite Corporate Wellness

Western Growers Assurance Trust, Pinnacle Claims Management, Cedar Health and Wellness Center

Ms. Yolanda Richardson

Government Operations Agency Secretary

February 19, 2021

Re: COVID-19 Vaccination for Santa Barbara County Food and Agriculture Workers

Dear Secretary Richardson,

Congratulations on your recent appointment and thank you for your leadership during this time of great need. The Santa Barbara County Food and Agriculture Clinic Consortium was convened to advance the common goal of promoting public health by administering the COVID vaccine to Food and Agriculture Workers who want to receive the vaccine as quickly and smoothly as possible.

We understand that the availability of the COVID vaccine remains a challenge. Per the DS5 Critical Infrastructure Occupations Database, code 45_2093, the State has estimated that there are 8,830 farmworkers and laborers in Santa Barbara County and is using that number for planning purposes for vaccine allocation. However, the California Employment Development Department (EDD)¹ listed 27,900 Total Farm employees in the County in July 2020. In June 2019, the peak Total Farm employment was listed at 29,000 employees. According to the EDD, these totals do not necessarily include H-2A Temporary Agricultural Guest Workers, which would add several thousand additional employees to the number of farm employees in Santa Barbara County. **We respectfully ask that the State use the current figures from the EDD to reflect an actual Agriculture Sector employment in Santa Barbara County of at least 28,000 to 33,000 individuals—not 8,830.**

The pandemic has shown that there are very few single solutions to complex issues. In addition to its cities and urban areas, Santa Barbara County is a strongly agricultural community with farmworkers from diverse cultural backgrounds with varying language and healthcare needs. We also understand that the response to the COVID pandemic has required quick adaptations, including the shift to Blue Shield/Kaiser as the State's Third Party Administrator (TPA) for vaccine distribution. Although the Blue Shield/Kaiser TPA is an important piece in the vaccine rollout to many community members, we believe that local healthcare partners will play an important role in vaccine acceptance and administration to our County's Food and Agriculture Workers. **In order to most expeditiously accelerate vaccine distribution to Food and Agriculture Workers that might otherwise be difficult to engage, we respectfully request the opportunity for the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department to continue to receive direct vaccine allocations for Food and Agriculture Workers for distribution to our partners in health.** If allowed to continue, the relationships cultivated through the Farmworker Working Group, Agricultural

¹ Labor Market Information Division, Employment Data by Industry, Historical Monthly Data.

<https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-by-industry.html>

Advisory Committee, Clinic Consortium, and many other partnerships, will better streamline the vaccination distribution process to Food and Agriculture Workers. Please allow direct allocations of vaccine to Santa Barbara County Public Health Department to continue through the next phase of vaccine distribution. The Clinic Consortium is positioned to quickly distribute the vaccine to Food and Agriculture Workers in our community.

We have a narrow window of opportunity before Santa Barbara County Food and Agriculture reaches peak employment and activity for the season. Please assist the Santa Barbara County Clinic Consortium in successfully providing COVID vaccinations to Food and Agriculture Workers as soon as practicable by updating the estimated number of Total Farm Workers in the State allocations and continuing County Public Health's direct role in distribution to diverse, trusted healthcare partners.

Thank you for your consideration and response to our comments.

Sincerely,

Dr. Van Do-Reynoso, Director
County of Santa Barbara, Public Health Department

Cathleen Fisher, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures
County of Santa Barbara, Agriculture/Weights & Measures Department

Dr. Steve Clarke, Medical Director
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