



March 15, 2021

strength in members.

The Honorable Kathleen C. Hochul  
Lieutenant Governor of New York State  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224-0341

**Re: Inclusion of financial services employees in vaccine distribution plan**

Dear Lieutenant Governor Hochul:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the 330 New York credit unions serving over 6 million New Yorkers in every corner of this State. As you know, and as you've publicly acknowledged, credit unions play a vital role in the financial services sector, providing individuals and businesses with fair and equitable access to the modern financial system.

Recently, you took the time out of your schedule to speak with New York credit unions during our Virtual Advocacy Tour. I again want to thank you for your time and comments, which reflected a clear understanding of credit unions and the importance of the not-for-profit banking model. We also discussed the importance including financial services workers in the State's vaccine distribution plan.

Throughout the entire COVID-19 pandemic, credit unions have remained open to ensure their members could access their funds, manage their assets and obtain critical financial products when they needed them the most. With so many New Yorkers hurting financially, credit unions have worked diligently and expeditiously to provide support. Many credit unions have offered interest-free loans; allowed members in need to skip payments; or designed specialized products and services to meet the unique needs of members during the pandemic. New York credit unions also stepped up to help small businesses through the Paycheck Protection Program, providing more than 9,000 PPP loans totaling \$429 million and supporting over 60,000 jobs during the first PPP round alone.

Credit union employees, particularly frontline staff, put their own health at risk to serve New Yorkers and fulfill the credit union mission: "People Helping People." And we should all be grateful they did. A breakdown in financial services on top of the economic and public health crises would have been disastrous.

Yet despite their selfless efforts, credit union and other financial services employees have astonishingly been left out of the State's vaccination rollout plan. As the State continues to ramp up its rollout plan, it's paramount that financial services workers — who have rightly been deemed "essential" by the State — be explicitly and urgently included for vaccine eligibility.

We have heard from multiple New York credit unions that have experienced coronavirus outbreaks in their branches or offices. Often, these were single-location institutions comprised of just a few employees. Any employee absence can be disruptive, but to a credit union with only 3 or 4 employees, potential exposure to COVID-19 has an especially deleterious impact on their operations and the

communities these credit unions serve. And the same is true for larger credit unions with multiple branches, which have had to redesign and reimagine their branch layouts and processes when outbreaks have occurred to ensure continued service.

One thing that has not changed, however, is credit unions' commitment to serving New Yorkers of every race, creed, identity, orientation and socio-economic standing; it is in the credit union DNA.

President Biden recently announced that he will direct states to begin opening vaccine distribution to all adults beginning in May — an admirable and worthwhile goal to aim for as the state of the pandemic and vaccine availability both continue to greatly improve.

But COVID-19 is an immediate threat. And credit union employees are still facing that threat every time they show up for work. New York State should not delay vaccine eligibility any longer for essential frontline financial services workers.

Thank you again for your leadership and engagement. The New York credit union community looks forward to continuing the dialogue with you as we strive to bring the benefits of credit unions to even more New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

William J. Mellin  
President and CEO  
New York Credit Union Association

CC: Jeff Lewis, Chief of Staff, Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul