

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

MAY 18, 2021

AND SHEILA KUEHL

Expanding Vaccine Access through Employee Paid Leave

Los Angeles County (the County) has made significant progress in its vaccination efforts, with over 8.5 million doses administered County-wide, of which 5.1 million are first doses and over 3.4 million are second doses. As of May 11, 61% of County residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and 45% are fully vaccinated. However, many health experts have estimated that at least 70-85% of the population will need to be fully vaccinated to reach herd immunity, and the County has reached a point where the vaccine supply has surpassed demand for the vaccine. The pace of administration has slowed significantly, and it is clear that more work will need to be done in order to remove barriers to vaccine access.

This is especially important in our Latinx and Black communities, which have considerably lower vaccination rates when compared to other demographics. Despite the County’s overall 61% vaccination rate, this is only 40.2% for our Latinx population and 36.5% for our Black communities age 16 and above. That these vaccination rates

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remain low despite over a month of County residents 16 and above being eligible with abundant vaccine supply indicates more must be done to increase access in these communities, many of whom are essential workers.

In workplaces across the County, many employees lack the financial means to take the necessary time off from work to access the vaccine. This is especially true for low wage and essential workers. In California, most essential workers are Black and Latinx. In fact, of Latinx workers in the State, 55% are employed in essential workers, and 48% of Black workers are in essential roles. Men are overrepresented in frontline jobs including food preparation, farm workers, and construction workers.

To help address vaccine disparities, the County deploys mobile units to go directly to select workplaces to provide vaccines. These mobile units target multiple communities, including highly impacted areas, neighborhoods with low access to transportation, homebound individuals, and senior housing centers. However, their capacity is limited, and mobile units alone cannot meet the significant need for every workplace across the County. It is clear that more must be done to remove barriers to access for workers across the County, especially our essential workers.

Opportunities for vaccines to come to workplaces must expand, but workers must also have a greater ability to access vaccination sites. Furthermore, workers must not be forced to decide between a paycheck and taking the necessary steps to safeguard their own wellbeing and the public health. To that end, it is critical that all workers have access to additional paid leave benefits to get vaccinated.

Although the first federal coronavirus relief package, the *Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA)*, included provisions requiring employers to provide 80

hours of paid sick leave for coronavirus-related purposes such as recovery, quarantine, and isolation, it carried large carve outs for businesses with fewer than 25 employees or greater than 500 employees. Reports have indicated that due to this carveout, roughly 50% of employees were exempt from this critical provision.

California law, enacted by Senate Bill 95, in part addresses this loophole by requiring all employers with 25 or more employees to provide 80 hours of COVID-19 related sick leave for full-time employees, and for part-time employees, hours to cover the normal schedule that employee would work over two weeks. Though this can be utilized for vaccine-related time off, many of our most vulnerable residents, especially our essential workers, may have already exhausted the existing 80-hour benefit due to either prior infection or exposure to COVID-19, and thus lack the necessary hours to take time off work to get vaccinated. To that end, it is important that workers be provided additional paid leave receive their vaccine.

This is especially important in light of Governor Newsom's stated goal of fully re-opening the State's economy by June 15, 2021. The current pace of individuals getting vaccinated must improve in the County and statewide to achieve that goal. It is in the best interest of the County's public health and the County's economy that we assure that all workers are vaccinated as expeditiously as possible, to prevent further outbreaks or delays for the County's re-opening. And as the County re-opens, ensuring workers are vaccinated will provide greater assurances that businesses are safe for customers to return to, restoring greater consumer confidence in returning to regular economic activity.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors approve the attached

urgency Ordinance to add Chapter 8.205 (Employee Paid Leave for Expanded Vaccine Access) to Division 5 – (COVID-19 Worker Protections) of Title 8 – (Consumer Protection, Business and Wage Regulations) of the Los Angeles County Municipal Code, to establish paid leave for employees in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

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