Introduction

Approximately two weeks ago, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 9 staff approached Pima County’s Health Department Director, Dr. Theresa Cullen, with State Health officials regarding the possibility of setting up a federal POD in Pima County. On March 17, 2021, Pima County staff met to discuss this further with federal and State officials.

We now understand this federal POD option has been declined by the Governor and Director of the Arizona Department of Health Services. The reasoning associated with this decline was that it would require support from the State and that support was unavailable.

It must be remembered that Pima County established five regional vaccination centers without any assistance from the State. Establishment of these centers has been consistent with the County’s Accelerated Vaccination Plan and presently they are only limited by vaccine supply distributed from the federal government through the State. The only assistance provided by the State in any vaccination center effort was when they took control of operations at the University of Arizona POD without consulting the County:

State Assistance for a Federal POD is Unnecessary

The County has demonstrated the ability to logistically setup a regional vaccination center, similar to a federal POD. In fact, we have setup and operated the regional vaccination centers at Tucson Medical Center, Banner North/South, the University of Arizona and Tucson Convention Center with our partners. Security, medical vaccinators, pharmacy, registration, reaction observation at our sites have all been provided by the County through our partners, contractor and volunteers. We require no assistance from the State in setting up a federal POD.

State Vaccine Supply Not Affected by a Federal POD

Another concern voiced by the State is that a federal vaccine POD would reduce the supply of vaccine provided to the State. Such is an incorrect assumption. Federal PODs come with a separate supply of vaccine. Therefore, the vaccinations provided by a federal POD are additive to those vaccines distributed by the federal government through the State.

In the case of the federal POD discussed, it was to be in place for six to eight weeks, providing 6,000 vaccinations, seven days a week for a minimum total of 252,000 vaccinations. It was also discussed that the timeframe could be extended to eight weeks,
with the first six weeks being the first and second shot of the Pfizer vaccine and the last two weeks being the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. If the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine were added for two weeks at 6,000 shots each day, that is another 84,000 vaccines, translating to 84,000 individuals being completely vaccinated. With this vaccine added to Pima County, 126,000 individuals would be completely vaccinated by Pfizer and another 84,000 through Johnson and Johnson, resulting in the vaccination of an additional 210,000 residents in Pima County. Such would be a major accomplishment.

**Federal POD Targeted toward Minority and Disadvantaged Populations**

In planning the optimal location for a federal POD, two sites were chosen to provide vaccine simultaneously, one at the El Pueblo Community Center and the other at the Kino Event Center. Both sites are now being converted into walk-in vaccination centers. These two sites were selected based on census tract information and are optimally placed to serve minority and low-income populations. Attached are Geographic Information System (GIS) maps that utilize census tract data regarding race and ethnicity for the Hispanic and African American communities. (Attachment 1) Overlaid on the census tract data are zip code areas. Clearly, these two sites have the highest Hispanic and African American populations in the region; from 93 percent Hispanic in census tract 38.01 and 20 percent African American in census tract 41.13. The zip code analysis demonstrated that the 85714 zip code is 89 percent Hispanic origin, the 85706 zip code is 85 percent Hispanic origin and the 85713 zip code is 71 percent Hispanic. This information is shown in Attachment 2 for both Hispanic and African American populations.

These targeted federal vaccination PODs would greatly accelerate the vaccination of Pima County’s minority and low-income population, and significantly complement and expand our efforts to achieve equitable levels of vaccine coverage across the County.

The State operated PODs are presently reporting an approximate four percent Hispanic population being vaccinated, while the statewide Hispanic population is 32 percent and the Hispanic population in Pima County is 38 percent.

The only vaccine sites focused on reaching significant low-income and minority populations have been the mobile clinics operated by the County and our contractors that are specifically targeted at these populations. Therefore, providing a regional vaccination center at both El Pueblo Community Center and the Kino Event Center would greatly accelerate our ability to vaccinate a majority of the Hispanic population in a relatively short period of time.

**State Opens Vaccinations to All**

On Monday, March 22, 2021, the State announced they would open the State vaccination PODs to anyone eligible to receive a vaccine. This means anyone over the age of 16 can be vaccinated at a State POD. Expanding this eligibility in Pima County would add another 500,000 individuals to the vaccine eligibility in Pima County. Without a federal POD it is impractical to lower the age target for vaccination or those over 16 for the County supported PODs. We were already planning to expand eligibility to allow anyone over the age of 16
who has a demonstrated chronic medical condition to be vaccinated as well as all essential workers. We will move to these eligible groups this week.

If a federal POD is located in Pima County at the El Pueblo and Kino sites, we would also modify our eligibility criteria for individuals residing in targeted zip codes. If demand from these targeted zip codes decline, we would open the federal POD to anyone in the County over the age of 16.

**Accelerated Vaccination is Essential to Stay Ahead of COVID-19 Variants**

A number of variants have recently been detected in a relatively short period of time in Pima County. The UK variant (B 1.1.7) which appears to be more transmissible and potentially more harmful, has been detected in surveillance and wastewater testing indicating that it is circulating at some level in this community. It is extraordinarily important to accelerate vaccination to stay ahead of what will continue to be the inevitable variant expansion across the state and the country. The proliferation of COVID variants threatens our ability to achieve herd immunity. The longer we continue to have COVID-19 infections and the risk of variant expansion, the longer the COVID-19 pandemic will continue and the harder it will be to bring it under control. Hence, it is extremely important to further accelerate vaccination rates among the general population to limit the proliferation of variant strains of COVID-19.

**Support for a Federal POD Unanimous Among Pima County Jurisdictions**

Recently, I discussed with City Managers the need to send a clear unanimous message to Phoenix that Pima County was united in our request for additional vaccine capacity for our population. The attached letter, signed by all of the region’s mayors and Chair Bronson, expresses this sentiment. (Attachment 3) In essence, it sends a relatively short message, that is, the more vaccines available to Pima County residents, the better and the quicker these vaccinations can be administered, resulting in the ability to protect Southern Arizonans, facilitate the opening of economies in each jurisdiction and rapidly recover from the devastating economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The primary goal of accelerated vaccination is public health with a secondary and equally important goal to reestablish the economic vitality of each jurisdiction and the County itself. This can only be achieved by rapid complete vaccination and immunity to the COVID-19 virus and its pending variants.

**A Federal POD will Mean Pima County Will Reach our Target Population Vaccination Faster**

Accelerating vaccination of the County population means the region can return to normalcy or what we used to believe was normal prior to the Coronavirus pandemic. This return means a better economy, improved job opportunities and in general, a healthier community for all. It is important that Pima County and Arizona lead the nation in recovery and return to normalcy. Establishment of a federal POD in Pima County will greatly assist this return.
For whatever reason, the limited vaccine supply distributed to Pima County has been and continues to be the major factor limiting our ability to vaccinate our population. Just this last week, Pima County received 28,000 Moderna vaccines and 2,200 doses of Johnson and Johnson. An additional seven trays of Pfizer were sent to Banner South and 21 trays (more than 21,000 doses) of Pfizer to the University of Arizona State operated POD.

The County’s Moderna distribution of 28,000 is not significantly greater than what we have historically been allocated; however, the County has capacity through the Tucson Convention Center, Tucson Medical Center, Banner South, pending initiation of the Kino Event Center and the El Pueblo Community Center to double this weekly vaccination capacity if the vaccine were available. Hence, the importance of a federal POD that comes with a weekly vaccine supply of 42,000 doses.

Recommendation

I recommend the Board of Supervisors approve the attached (Attachment 4) Resolution to the Biden Administration, including the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Acting Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator requesting Pima County be afforded the opportunity of hosting a federal Type 1 Vaccination Center. The County will cooperate and assist with the establishment of a federal vaccination center at either or both the El Pueblo Community Center and the Kino Event Center.

Sincerely,

C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

CHH/anc - March 23, 2021

Attachments

c: Jan Lesher, Chief Deputy County Administrator
   Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
   Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
   Health and Community Services
   Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Pima County Health Department
Percent of African American Persons by Census Tract

Source: Esri, 2020

0 - 2 %
3 - 5 %
6 - 8 %
9 - 12 %
13 - 20 %

Zip Code Boundaries

3/17/2021
Percent of Persons of Hispanic Origin by Census Tract

Source: Esri, 2020

2 - 20 %
21 - 35 %
36 - 50 %
51 - 70 %
71 - 93 %
Percent of African American Persons by Zip Code

Source: Esri, 2020
Percent of Persons of Hispanic Origin by Zip Code
Source: Esri, 2020

Maps adapted from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019.

Kino Event Center
El Pueblo Community Center

Zip Code Boundaries

20%
71%
85%
89%
March 22, 2021

The Honorable Douglas A. Ducey, Governor
State of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Re: Federal COVID-19 Point of Distribution (POD) in Pima County

Dear Governor Ducey:

We appreciate all of the effort that you and the Arizona Department of Health Services have put into the COVID-19 vaccination program statewide. We have made significant progress in vaccinating a large portion of our population, particularly those who are most susceptible to hospitalization or death.

In Pima County, we have the benefit of a State POD at the University of Arizona and several regional PODs operated by Pima County. We have also enlisted the assistance of our community health centers and partner organizations to provide mobile clinics to disadvantaged and minority populations.

We understand the federal government may be willing to locate a federal POD in Pima County. Pima County is prepared to provide any and all assistance in setting up this POD such that it does not require resources from the State. In addition, the vaccine supplied by federal policy will not deduct from the State vaccine allocation.

This opportunity potentially provides another 300,000 or more vaccines in Pima County that would be targeted for our low-income and minority communities. We understand the State has declined to accept the federal offer for a variety of reasons. We would appreciate your reconsidering this position in asking the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to establish a federal POD in Pima County.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Sharon Bronson
Chair, Pima County Board of Supervisors

The Honorable Regina Romero
Mayor, City of Tucson

The Honorable Bob Teso
Mayor, City of South Tucson

The Honorable Ed Honea
Mayor, Town of Marana

The Honorable Joseph Winfield
Mayor, Town of Oro Valley

The Honorable Tom Murphy
Mayor, Town of Sahuarita

The Honorable Michael Ortega, City Manager, City of Tucson
The Honorable Veronica Moreno, City Manager, City of South Tucson
The Honorable Terry Rozema, Town Manager, Town of Marana
The Honorable Mary Jacobs, Town Manager, Town of Oro Valley
The Honorable L. Kelly Udall, Town Manager, Town of Sahuarita
RESOLUTION NO. 2021-__________

RESOLUTION OF THE PIMA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REQUESTING FEMA DESIGNATE PIMA COUNTY AS A TYPE 1 COMMUNITY VACCINATION CENTER

WHEREAS, The Covid-19 pandemic is the worst public-health crisis the United States has faced in a century, resulting in over 2,326 confirmed deaths in Pima County alone and infecting over 111,912 people in our county alone, though the actual numbers of deaths and infections are very likely higher; and

WHEREAS, President Biden’s National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness Plan includes key goals that, without the support of the State of Arizona, can only be achieved through partnership with Pima County; and

WHEREAS, Consistency with President Biden’s National Strategy Goal 2 requires that Pima County mount a safe, effective, comprehensive vaccination campaign that:

- Ensures the availability of safe, effective vaccines.
- Accelerates getting shots into arms and get vaccines to the communities that need them most
- Creates as many venues as need for people to be vaccinate.
- Focuses on hard-to-reach and high-risk populations; and

WHEREAS, Uniformity with President Biden’s National Strategy Goal 6 requires that Pima County protect those most at risk and advance equity, including across racial, ethnic and rural/urban lines and ensure equitable access to critical COVID-19 PPE, tests, therapies and vaccines; and

WHEREAS, Adherence with Goal 7 of President Biden’s National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response addresses the unique combination of critical public health and humanitarian issues faced by Pima County as it calls for the United States to “surge the international COVID-19 public health and humanitarian response.” and

WHEREAS, The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established a Civil Rights Advisory Group to evaluate policies, practices, strategies and plans in place to identify and eliminate inequities with a goal to ensure equity is incorporate in all activities FEMA and the Federal Government fund to vaccinate the country; and

WHEREAS, The FEMA Civil Rights Advisory Group’s stated goal to ensure the meaningful inclusion of disadvantaged communities including low-income and racial and ethnic minority groups is consistent with Pima County’s plans for vaccination; and

WHEREAS, FEMA has and should continue to recognize best practices for communities that anticipate and attend to civil rights concerns during this pandemic of which Pima County is such a community; and
WHEREAS, Pima County and its partners have developed the infrastructure to support COVID vaccination efforts, including:

a. Three large Point of Distribution (POD)s supported by Pima County and operated collaboratively with our partners;
b. A state supported POD at the University of Arizona in coordination with the Pima County Health Department.
c. The conduct of multiple mobile vaccination clinic events throughout the vast geography of this County by the Health Department, its contractors, federally qualified health center (community health center) and fire department partners.
d. Coordinated efforts to vaccinate individuals in congregate living environments, homeless shelters, and those who are homebound; and.

WHEREAS, Through the efforts of Pima County and our many partners, as of March 22, 2021, 405,357 doses of vaccine have been administered to Pima County residents or 25% of the population; and.

WHEREAS, The Pima County Health Department has developed tools to identify and target populations with high social vulnerability and limited access to vaccination. These data continue to indicate a need for targeted vaccination efforts to achieve equitable vaccine distribution; and

WHEREAS, There are more than 500,000 individuals who are eligible but remain unimmunized, including many front-line workers from low-income and minority communities, meaning that we need to anticipate and plan for an additional 1,000,000 vaccinations; and

WHEREAS, there is an increasing number of the UK genomic variant strains being identified in Pima County, necessitating an acceleration of immunization rates,

WHEREAS, FEMA has made a commitment to operate self-limited vaccination PODS in different communities, with a vaccine supply that does not detract from the state vaccination allotment. and.

WHEREAS, FEMA has offered to provide a six to eight week federally supported POD with federally allocated vaccine supply; and.

WHEREAS, A FEMA supported POD would accelerate community vaccination efforts, enhance the vaccine availability for vulnerable populations and allow Pima County to achieve broad population coverage in May in keeping with the President’s goals.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT

1. The Pima County Board of Supervisors respectfully requests the Governor reconsider the matter of providing a Type 1 Federal vaccination center and approve same for distressed and minority communities, and

2. If the Governor does not approve of a Type 1 Federal vaccination center in Pima County, the Board of Supervisors requests that the Biden Administration, in keeping with their National Strategy Goals for COVID-19 vaccination, direct the Department of Homeland Security Secretary and the Acting Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator to establish a Type 1 Federal vaccination center to provide vaccine opportunities to disadvantaged and minority communities.

3. Pima County stands ready to provide the necessary site and administrative, management, security, registration and vaccination support for the placement of a federal Type 1 Community Vaccination Center in Pima County.

4. The Clerk of the Board is directed to send this Resolution to Governor Doug Ducey, the White House Coronavirus Task Force, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Acting Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency as well as the Arizona Congressional Delegation.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors, Pima County, Arizona, this ____, day of March 2021.

____________________________________
Chair, Pima County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:      APPROVED AS TO FORM:

__________________________  __________________________
Clerk of the Board      Deputy County Attorney