
**Statement by the Chancellor and Presidents of the
University System of Maryland on COVID-19 Vaccinations
February 2021**

As 2021 begins, we at last have real hope in the fight against COVID-19. Vaccines proved to be safe and effective will soon be widely available to the American public. That's certainly worth celebrating. But a vaccine will not end this pandemic; only people getting vaccinated can do that.

As chancellor of the University System of Maryland (USM) and presidents of the USM's 12 institutions, we pledge to get vaccinated as soon as we become eligible, and we ask those in the communities we serve to do the same.

Health experts say at least seven in 10 Americans need to be vaccinated before we can achieve herd immunity and get infection spread under control. The point of vaccination isn't simply to protect yourself; it's to protect everyone around you.

And so we do this for our families, our friends and neighbors, our USM colleagues and students, all of Maryland's frontline and essential workers. We do this for those who cannot or will not get vaccinated, for the children and young teens who aren't yet approved for a vaccine, for the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions who are especially vulnerable to the virus. It's an act of service and an act of humanity.

But it's also an act of trust. We will get vaccinated because we understand the rigor of the vaccine development and testing processes, and we know the professionalism of the scientists who led these efforts—among them, many of the USM's own faculty and alumni. We will do this because we are confident in the vaccines' safety and efficacy; we appreciate the integrity of the scientific process; and we are grateful to the women and men who volunteered for the clinical trials.

Demonstrating our trust is critical, considering the *distrust* that exists in many communities, especially communities of color. America's chronic inequality in health care access, our racial disparities in health outcomes, and our history of racism and exploitation in medical research and care have made Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities justifiably skeptical. But it is the very members of these communities who are most at risk of contracting COVID-19 and dying from it. We simply must protect those who are suffering the pandemic's greatest harm. And we urge *anyone* concerned about vaccine safety to allay those concerns by talking with their health care provider.

We will get vaccinated to rebuild the economies of our state, and cities, and towns; to support the small businesses and business owners who have suffered financially; to help all those who have lost their jobs finally get back to work. We will get vaccinated so that our children can go back to school, where daily

structure, academic supports, and social connections help them learn and grow. We will get vaccinated to reopen access to basic health care and important social services that strengthen communities.

We've learned many lessons from this pandemic: how to scale up testing, how to prevent and track disease spread, how to communicate best practices, how to accelerate vaccine development and quickly adopt effective treatments. We must continue to study these lessons so that we're better prepared for the *next* pandemic—so that we can stop it in its tracks. But first we have to win our fight against COVID. And we cannot do that unless most of us get vaccinated.

The USM's students, faculty, staff, and alumni have been leaders in battling COVID from the earliest days. With education, research, engineering, community outreach, and public policy guidance, we've answered every call. With this pledge, we answer another call: to ensure the communities we serve get the full protection of a COVID vaccine, so that, together, we can end this virus for good.



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