



December 7, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Secretary Azar:

The National Federation of the Blind appreciates your dedication and leadership in order to make the COVID-19 vaccination readily accessible for all Americans. The pandemic has changed the medical landscape and had a detrimental effect on the lives of many individuals and families across the country. With the optimism of the COVID-19 vaccine being soon released to the public, I urge you to ensure that vaccination locations are accessible to blind people and all others with disabilities.

The coronavirus has prompted federal, state, and local governments to enact protocols in order to aid businesses and ensure the safety of Americans. Many businesses and restaurants have been, and continue to offer services via drive through or by implementing curbside pickup. Unfortunately, many states at the beginning of the pandemic adopted drive through testing sites which were unnecessarily difficult, if not outright impossible, for blind people and others with disabilities to access. The National Federation of the Blind is concerned that the same issue will arise pertaining to the distribution of the vaccine, along with the accessibility of the vaccine itself. As an example, many retailers are offering COVID-19 tests that can be self-administered. While blind people are able to administer the tests themselves, they are forced to rely on a third party to read the test's results. Such a barrier makes it impossible for a blind person to privately and independently take a self-administered COVID-19 test as a result. A national emergency does not preclude federal, state, and local governments from providing equal access for persons with disabilities to vaccinations, or other goods and services made available by the government to the public.

If the coronavirus vaccine is distributed to Americans in a drive-through location, that facility must also ensure that it is equally accessible to blind pedestrians in a walk-up manner. As president of the nation's civil rights organization of the blind, I urge you to prioritize equal access to all drive-through vaccination stations across the country.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Riccobono, President
National Federation of the Blind