February 24, 2021

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor  
New York State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Dr. Howard Zucker  
Commissioner, New York State Department of Health  
Corning Tower Building  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12237

The enclosed serves as a follow-up to the New York Library Association’s initial request letter sent on January 12.

In January, Phase 1b was expanded to include individuals 65 and older, educators (P-12 staff & in-person college instructors), and essential retail employees. Unfortunately, the titles of those included under “educator” was not exhaustive and has led to inconsistent access to vaccination within the library community.

Libraries have amended their operations and expanded their services during the pandemic to ensure that patrons have the resources they need. These innovative services would not be available without our state’s front-line library workers.

Earlier this month, the New York Library Association coordinated an online petition allowing individuals to vocalize their support for library workers to be explicitly included within Phase 1b. To date, 2,883 people have signed the petition. A copy of the petition as well as a complete list of the signers is attached.

Jeremy Johannesen  
Executive Director  
New York Library Association

Claudia Depkin  
President  
New York Library Association
Libraries are critical infrastructure and cannot operate without library workers who interact directly with the public. With the pandemic disproportionately impacting New York’s marginalized communities, expedited eligibility for vaccination for library workers will allow libraries to resume or expand critical services that New Yorkers desperately need during the current public health emergency.

While we understand the complexity of setting and implementing priorities, especially given the limited supply of vaccinations being sent to our state from the federal government, we know that libraries are key to our state’s recovery.

By including library workers to Phase 1B, they can return to providing the services and programs to their patrons, at expanded capacity, without fear of exposure or unintended spread of the coronavirus.

(Signatories attached.)