

UNIFIED PARKINSON'S ADVOCACY COUNCIL

American Parkinson Disease Association

Brian Grant Foundation

Dallas Area Parkinsonism Society

Davis Phinney Foundation

Friends of Parkinson's

Hawai'i Parkinson Association

Houston Area Parkinson Society

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research

Michigan Parkinson Foundation

Northwest Parkinson's Foundation

Parkinson Alliance

Parkinson Association of Alabama

Parkinson Association of Central Florida

Parkinson Association of Northern California

Parkinson Association of the Rockies

Parkinson's Foundation

Parkinson's Resources of Oregon

Parkinson's Unity Walk

Parkinson & Movement Disorder Alliance

Parkinson Voice Project

Power for Parkinson's

Wilkins Parkinson's Foundation

Wisconsin Parkinson Association

Dear Governor:

On behalf of the Parkinson's community, and the organizations that comprise the Unified Parkinson's Advocacy Council (UPAC) I am writing to urge you to give a higher prioritization for providing the COVID-19 vaccine to people living with Parkinson's disease (PD) and their care partners. UPAC was established by The Michael J. Fox Foundation to ensure a unified voice around the policy priorities of people with Parkinson's and their families.

Parkinson's disease (PD) may have been given a lower coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination priority than recent COVID-19/PD data warrants. People with Parkinson's who contract COVID-19 experience new or worsening Parkinson's symptoms. And those who are older and have advancing disease (such as with significantly decreased movement or swallowing problems) are at higher risk for more severe COVID-19 infection, including an increased risk of death. For all people with Parkinson's (regardless of COVID-19 infection), COVID-19 risk impacts health care access, exercise and social activities – causing new or worsened symptoms and decreased quality of life.

Parkinson's disease is the 14th leading cause of death in the United States, with 31,963 fatalities in 2017. The leading cause of mortality in people with Parkinson's is aspiration pneumonia resulting from food and liquids being aspirated into the lungs due to a degraded swallowing mechanism. COVID-19, with its effects on the respiratory system, can compound this pneumonia risk. And hospitalization – for COVID-19 or any other reason – is a risk for people with Parkinson's, who may experience deconditioning, exposure to treatments that worsen symptoms, or inability to receive their critical Parkinson's medications correctly.

People with Parkinson's who contract COVID-19 infection experience new and worsening motor and non-motor symptoms. Even those without infection are impacted by decreased access to health care (both in and out of the home), exercise and social activities, increasing symptoms and decreasing quality of life. Studies have shown that exercise improves the quality of life, improves gait and other symptoms, and may slow the progression of Parkinson's disease.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
American Parkinson Disease Association

UNIFIED PARKINSON'S ADVOCACY COUNCIL

Brian Grant Foundation
Dallas Area Parkinsonism Society
Davis Phinney Foundation
Friends of Parkinson's
Houston Area Parkinson Society
Michigan Parkinson Foundation
Northwest Parkinson's Foundation
Parkinson Alliance
Parkinson Association of Alabama
Parkinson Association of Central Florida
Parkinson Association of Northern California
Parkinson Association of the Rockies
Parkinson's Foundation
Parkinson's Resources of Oregon
Parkinson's Unity Walk
Parkinson & Movement Disorder Alliance
Parkinson Voice Project
Power for Parkinson's
Wilkins Parkinson's Foundation
Wisconsin Parkinson Association