



May 13, 2021

Dear Georgia Faith Leaders:

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency in preventing disease, injury and promoting health and well-being for the state of Georgia.

In Georgia, we have provided at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to over 3 million residents since December, and almost 3 million residents are fully vaccinated. However, we are diligently working to vaccinate 80% of our eligible Georgia residents by summer. I charged my team, the COVID-19 Health Equity Council, partners and the community-at-large with helping to achieve this 80% goal. This achievement will help us to significantly mitigate COVID-19 risk across our state.

As I travel across the state meeting with community residents and leaders, I recognize that our COVID-19 response now calls for a local approach where communities are coming together to assist in the fight against COVID-19. Alignment of local efforts are most needed to help decrease vaccine hesitancy. As such, I established a COVID-19 Health Equity Council, comprised of a diverse, multi-sectoral group of local leaders who are engaging their communities in various COVID-19 response campaigns. To date, the Council has been influential in helping to decrease vaccine hesitancy by disseminating vaccine information, serving as local messengers, and hosting community mobile vaccine sites.

While we have wins in our state, we still have many community members who are vaccine hesitant and are uncertain about why they even need a vaccine. So collectively, we need to build community confidence in the effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 vaccines. Many of you are already partnering with us, and we are hopeful that you as faith leaders will continue this partnership. As “trusted messengers”, you will help us expand our outreach efforts through your congregations and in the community. We also have prepared a toolkit to assist with local communication. Marketing, COVID-19 prevention messaging, and outlines for engaging community stakeholders are included within the toolkit.

I encourage you to use these resources widely to “spread the word” about vaccinating Covid-19. I am certain that we can successfully fight COVID-19 in Georgia *together*.

Sincerely,

Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner and State Health Officer