

U.S. Rep. Gallagher, Delegation: Call on Evers to fully vaccinate those in assisted living facilities

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Reps. Mike Gallagher (WI-08), Glenn Grothman (WI-06), Bryan Steil (WI-01), and Tom Tiffany (WI-07) today called on Governor Tony Evers to address the state of Wisconsin’s struggle to fully vaccinate seniors in assisted living facilities — one of the populations most vulnerable to COVID-19.

In a letter to the Governor, the lawmakers expressed concerns about the effort to fully vaccinate seniors living in these facilities and requested answers to three questions about the state’s approach.

The lawmakers wrote, “We are proud of Wisconsin’s status as the nation’s leader in vaccine utilization and appreciate your contributions to this critical rollout. However, we are deeply concerned that many seniors in assisted living homes are still waiting for full vaccination more than three months after the first vaccine received emergency approval from the Food and Drug Administration...We urge you to ensure this vulnerable population receives their full vaccination series as quickly as possible.”

Despite having enough doses to fully vaccinate this community since January, Wisconsin has lagged behind the rest of the country in distributing full doses to seniors in assisted living facilities. Recent data [collected by CVS Health](#) suggests the state currently ranks last in achieving this goal.

To ensure seniors living in assisted living homes receive the care they deserve, the lawmakers requested answers to the following questions:

1. What factors contributed to conflicting interpretations of guidance from the requirements of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program?
2. What prevented the state from allocating vaccines in such a way to activate the assisted living arm of the federal program while continuing to vaccinate nursing home residents and health care workers?
3. What lessons can Wisconsin implement from other states to ensure assisted living populations quickly receive their complete vaccine series?

Click [HERE](#) to view a copy of the letter, or read the text below.

Dear Governor Evers,

Thanks to American innovation, unprecedented federal action, and the tireless commitment of our health care workers and pharmacists, hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites have received COVID-19 vaccines. We are proud of Wisconsin's status as the nation's leader in vaccine utilization and appreciate your contributions to this critical rollout. However, we are deeply concerned that many seniors in assisted living homes are still waiting for full vaccination more than three months after the first vaccine received emergency approval from the Food and Drug Administration. In fact, recent data suggests that Wisconsin ranks last nationally when it comes to fully vaccinating this critical population. We urge you to ensure this vulnerable population receives their full vaccination series as quickly as possible.

Especially concerning are reports that Wisconsin possessed enough vaccine doses to begin vaccinating assisted living facilities prior to late January. ⁴ We are equally concerned with the conflicting explanations state health officials have given for this delay.⁵ While we understand that public health officials are operating with imperfect information and that the state needed to reserve doses for health care workers and frontline responders, other states have faced these same challenges and have largely already fully vaccinated their assisted living populations. We are concerned that the state's approach in January may have unnecessarily slowed this vaccination process. To ensure Wisconsin seniors quickly receive the care they require, we respectfully request the answers to the following questions:

1) What factors contributed to conflicting interpretations of guidance from the requirements of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program?

2) What prevented the state from allocating vaccines in such a way to activate the assisted living arm of the federal program while continuing to vaccinate nursing home residents and health care workers?

3) What lessons can Wisconsin implement from other states to ensure assisted living populations quickly receive their complete vaccine series? As more and more Wisconsinites receive this life-saving vaccine, we ask that our assisted living populations not be left behind.

We ask that you fulfill our state's commitment to these seniors so that at-risk Wisconsinites can begin to see a light at the end of the tunnel and that life in our state can return that much closer to normal. Thank you for your attention, and we stand ready to work with you on behalf of all Wisconsinites.

Sincerely,

Rep. Mike Gallagher

Rep. Glenn Grothman

Rep. Bryan Steil

Rep. Tom Tiffany