

verizon[✓] CWA

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We are jointly writing to you today to urgently request that Verizon's front line telecommunications workers be given immediate priority eligibility with other essential workers for COVID-19 vaccinations. Verizon New York LLC and its affiliates employ 15,200 individuals in the State of New York and the CWA represents about 11,500 of these workers. Throughout the pandemic, these employees have played a critical role in helping society and the state function and to deliver essential services.

Since the beginning of the pandemic more than one year ago, the federal Department of Homeland Security has identified front line telecommunication workers as among "essential critical infrastructure workers." Broadband technology – and the women and men who deliver it – have been the key enablers to meet our families' healthcare, education and other connectivity needs. Indeed, our essential critical infrastructure workers have supported federal, state, local, territorial and tribal governments in delivering important national security and public safety functions. This includes emergency first responders, public messaging and 911 communications, providing lifesaving capabilities that were especially critical in dealing with this unprecedented public health emergency.

Although many of Verizon's employees, including most call center employees, have been able to work from home during the pandemic, our telecommunications technicians have reported to work, entered customer premises to perform installation and repairs, and worked on-site to conduct construction and maintenance tasks on telecommunications infrastructure. They have worked in Central Offices to ensure that the computerized backbone of our telecommunications network continues to function smoothly, at a time when the people of New York are more dependent on that network than ever.

Despite the enormity of their contributions, New York State has not yet extended Phase 1B "essential worker" status to frontline telecommunications workers for the purposes of vaccine eligibility. Now that New York's COVID-19 vaccination rollout is well underway, and the state's higher risk populations have been properly cared for, we urge you to extend vaccine eligibility to these workers along with other essential workers.

We are of course well aware of the vast demand for the vaccine, and the difficult choices you face in determining who should be eligible. The CWA represents frontline health care workers and government employees, and very much appreciates the speed with which the vaccine was made available to them. However, at this point in the vaccine rollout, we can see no reason why eligibility for frontline telecommunications workers should be further delayed, and we respectfully urge you to grant eligibility to these workers immediately.



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