PRESIDENT
Kimberly A. Dymecki
Suwanee
PRESIDENT ELECT
Jason Sheffield
Decatur
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Natasha Silas
Atlanta
VICE PRESIDENTS
District #1
A- Gabe Cliett
Statesboro
B - Patrick Ferris
Douglas
District #2
A – Gary Lamar
Albany
B – Lon Kemeness
Tifton
District #3
A - Nyonnohweah Seekie
Macon
B – Chance Hardy
Columbus
District #4
A - LeeAnne Lynch
Decatur
B – Rick Ryczek
Lawrenceville
C – Christopher Davis
Conyers
District #5
Michael Brill
Manal Chehimi
John A. Garland
Suzanne Tevis
Teri Thompson
Atlanta
District #6
A – James Boles
Stockbridge
B – Brian Lockerbie
LaGrange
District #7
A – Carlos Rodriguez
Marietta
B – Jad B. Johnson
LaFayette
District #8
A - Sean Brodie
Gray
B – Clay Tapley
Dublin
District #9
A – Sarah Illg
East Elijay
B – Drew Powell
Clarkesville
C - William S. Hardman, Jr.
Gainesville
District #10
A - Charles Rollins
Augusta
B – Allie McCarthy
Athens
SECRETARY
Ashleigh Merchant
Marietta
TREASURER
Elizabeth Brandenburg
Decatur
PARLIAMENTARIAN
Arturo Corso
Gainesville
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Jill Travis
Atlanta

Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

215 Church Street
Suite 111
Decatur, GA 30030
(404) 248-1777
Fax: (404) 248-1666

March 9, 2021

Governor Brian Kemp
Office of the Governor
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Submitted via email to: brian.kemp@georgia.gov

Re: Vaccine Prioritization for Criminal Defense Lawyers

Dear Governor Kemp:

In late January 2021, a letter was sent on behalf of the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (GACDL) urging you to prioritize and include criminal defense lawyers in Phase 1-B of Georgia's COVID-19 Vaccine Administration. In light of the evolving nature of vaccine distribution, I write today to reiterate this request.

Today, Chief Justice Melton issued his 12th Judicial Emergency Order allowing for the resumption of jury trials, beginning immediately. In anticipation of this Order numerous jurisdictions have summoned jurors and have begun scheduling jury trials. As a result, GACDL anticipates that its members will be required to personally appear in court for hearings and resume jury trials prior to the end of March 2021. Unvaccinated defense lawyers create a risk for all Georgians.

Criminal defense lawyers are essential to the criminal legal system and its proper functioning. Effective criminal defense requires direct contact with individuals who are incarcerated, both in preparation for and during trial, where the risk of exposure to disease is much greater. To ensure that effective assistance of counsel is provided, criminal defense lawyers cannot simply distance themselves from their clients. Criminal defense lawyers are eager to get back to trying cases and protecting their clients' constitiutuonal rights but, understandably, desire to be safe and protected in the process.

GACDL understands that the original phases (1-A, 1-B, and 1-C) for vaccination eligibility are being eliminated in favor of adding groups of people (e.g., educators) to the original Phase 1-A list. In order to ensure the effective and safe operation of the criminal legal system, without unnecessarily exposing criminal defense lawyers to a deadly virus, GACDL urges you to prioritize criminal defense lawyers, by adding them to the list of people that are currently eligible for vaccination.

Sincerely,

Kimberly A. Dymecki
President

cc: Dr. Kathleen Toomey, Commissioner, Kathleen.Toomey@dph.ga.gov
Chief Justice Harold Melton, Supreme Court of Georgia, meltonh@gasupreme.us
Trey Kilpatrick, Chief of Staff, Trey.Kilpatrick@georgia.gov
David Dove, Executive Counsel, David.Dove@georgia.gov
Judge Brian Amero, President, Council of Superior Court Judges, bamero@co.henry.ga.us
Judge Wesley Tailor, President, Council of State Court Judges, wes.tailor@fultoncountyga.gov
Judge Lisa Jones, President, Council of Juvenile Court Judges, judgelisacjones@outlook.com
Judge Kelli Wolk, President, Council of Probate Court Judges, kelli.wolk@cobbcounty.org
Miranda Williams, Policy Advisor, miranda.williams@georgia.gov
DPH Constituent Services: DPH-ConstituentServices@dph.ga.gov