

**CONGRESSMAN FRANK PALLONE, JR.**  
*Sixth District of New Jersey*

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**PALLONE STATEMENT AT HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE  
HEARING ON "H1N1 PREPAREDNESS: AN OVERVIEW OF  
VACCINE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION"**

*Washington, D.C. --- U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, gave the following opening statement today at a hearing on H1N1 Preparedness.*

“Good morning. Today we are meeting for a joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Health and the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation to examine the current state of H1N1 vaccine production and distribution. The purpose of this hearing is to get an update from the main stakeholders involved in the manufacturing and distribution of the H1N1 vaccine, to shed some light on where we currently are in the process and what we can expect moving forward.

“The most recent estimates from the Centers for Disease Control are truly alarming. Over the past six months, it is likely that 22 million people in our country have been infected with the disease and about 98’000 have been hospitalized. To date, it is estimated that 3’900 individuals have lost their lives to H1N1. Unlike regular flu that affects predominantly the elderly population, the vast majority of H1N1 deaths have occurred in people between the ages of 18 to 64. Even more tragically, the CDC estimates that 540 of these deaths have occurred in children. These numbers are significantly higher than earlier estimates and as we move further into flu season, we can only expect to see them increase even more.

“We now know that this virus and vaccine is unlike flu vaccines that we have produce before in that it is extremely difficult to grow. Early estimates on vaccine amounts were based on how vaccines usually behave in the production phases. Unbeknownst to anyone involved in this process, H1N1 proved to be very different. And though the manufacturers have been able to speed the growth of the vaccine by selecting the fastest growing strains, we still are lagging behind where we originally thought we would be with our production numbers. Fortunately though, this particular vaccine appears to be highly effective in creating an immune response in individuals and for adults, one small dose of the vaccine will produce enough of a response to protect from H1N1.

“But those early delays in production are now rearing their ugly head as our country watches the disease spread and take lives while vaccine is still hard to come by. To date, nearly 42 million doses are available for distribution which is about half of what we originally expected to have by this time.

“It is no wonder therefore, that story after story in the papers and on the news highlights the frustration that the American people are facing in trying to get the vaccine that would protect them from this disease. We hear accounts of individuals waiting on lines for hours at clinics. Some cannot find clinics in their neighborhoods at all and areas are still waiting to receive even their first doses of the vaccine. There is a school district in my hometown for example that has yet to receive the vaccine and understandably, the parents are irritated. This frustration is exacerbated by accounts of areas in the country that seem to have more than enough vaccine, where getting this vital protection from H1N1 poses no difficulty at all. Naturally, people are confused and angry.

“This is why I and Chairman Stupak are holding this hearing today. I personally would like to better understand how the production of vaccine is going. When for example will we be able to expect enough vaccine so that all individuals who want it can get it, and will this happen before flu season is over? I also would like to understand more about the distribution process. I understand that the States make their own distribution plans and do the ordering for their State through the CDC. But how are these plans created and how do States make the determination where to start with vaccine distribution and which distributors to prioritize?

“We have a number of very important individuals with us today who have been working around the clock on these issues and I would like to welcome you all. We appreciate your taking the time to provide us with this update today. I am looking forward to hearing from you all about the distribution of the vaccine as well as where we are from a manufacturing perspective.

“I would also like to thank Chairman Stupak for working with me to put together this hearing. And I would now recognize my colleague Mr. Deal for his opening statement.”