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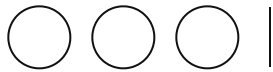
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Disability rights group files civil rights complaint against CT vaccine plan



Emilie Munson

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Doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in Hartford, Connecticut. (Brad Horrigan/Hartford Courant/TNS)
Photo by Brad Horrigan | bhorrigan@courant.com/Hartford Courant/TNS / TNS

In the first major challenge to Connecticut's new age-based vaccine plan, the non-profit Disability Rights Connecticut filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services claiming the policy "constitute disability discrimination" and calling on the agency to order its changes.

The complaint calls on the HHS Office of Civil Rights to "direct Connecticut to immediately revise its COVID-19 vaccine policy to include individuals with underlying medical conditions, regardless of their age, who are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection...as a priority in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine." DRCT is also urging the Office of Civil Rights to "advise the State of Connecticut that it must have a process for people with disabilities to request and obtain reasonable modifications" to the state's age-based vaccine eligibility policy.

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The policy announced Monday by Gov. Ned Lamont establishes a system where all Connecticut residents yet to be immunized will be vaccinated based on their age, except teachers and child care providers who will have special clinics. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends individuals with medical conditions that put them at risk for coronavirus and essential workers receive the

Residents, including those with underlying medical conditions, have been among the loudest voices questioning the governor’s new plan, which upended weeks of indications that vaccines would soon focus on these groups.

“Connecticut’s new policy has apparently been developed in the belief that it would be easier to administer. But merely because it may be easier does not make it right,” said Deborah Dorfman, Executive Director of Disability Rights Connecticut. “The state has now put more than 1 million people ahead of individuals in their 20’s or early 30’s, for example, who have a disability that would have made them eligible to receive a vaccination just days from now.”

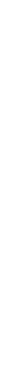


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Last year, DRCT and other groups filed another complaint with the Office of Civil Rights which resulted in the state Department of Public Health agreeing to change its state policy that prevented most people with disabilities who were hospitalized from having a support person with them.

Lamont and DPH were not immediately available for comment.

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Emilie Munson is a regional correspondent for Hearst newspapers based in Washington, D.C. She covers the Connecticut and New York Congressional delegations for Hearst Connecticut Media and the Albany-Times Union. Previously, Emilie was state capitol reporter for Hearst Connecticut Media, covering politics and government. She is the recipient of a 2017 Society of Professional Journalists' Sigma Delta Chi award in Feature Reporting for her five-part series "Behind the Front Door." The series explored the intersection of domestic violence and wealth in Greenwich, Connecticut. She also worked as an education reporter for Greenwich Time.

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