

Complaint: For Those With Disabilities, Underlying Conditions, Vaccine Policy 'Discriminatory'

By ALI WARSHAVSKY · 16 HOURS AGO

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Disability Rights Connecticut has [filed a complaint](#) with the U.S. Office for Civil Rights over the state's new age-based vaccine policy.

Executive Director Deborah Dorfman said many people with disabilities have underlying conditions that put them at risk of complications from COVID-19. She said the age-based plan may make it easier for the state, but it doesn't make it right.

"It's not consistent with what is required under the Americans with Disabilities Act," said Dorfman. "You can't decide you aren't going to provide reasonable modifications because it's not convenient. That's just not an excuse."

She said the new policy is discriminatory against people with disabilities. The complaint asks the state to revise the rollout to make accommodations for people who need the vaccine most.

Brian Nethercott of Milford is one of those people.

"My doctors consider me severely immunocompromised as my body recovers," said Nethercott, who is in remission from stage 3 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

During 2020, he received more than 500 hours of chemotherapy treatments and then radiation. He said he talked with his doctors about the COVID-19 vaccine just last week.

"My doctors were like, 'As soon as you have availability, you should get it no matter what one it is,'" said Nethercott, 42.



Brian Nethercott celebrates the end of his lengthy chemotherapy treatment.
CREDIT COURTESY: BRIAN NETHERCOTT

Nethercott found out Monday that he won't be getting a shot next week. He will have to wait until his age group is eligible in April, now that the state has changed its plans.

"For every age group there is sub-demographics that need to be addressed," said Nethercott. "There could be very healthy 30- through 50-year-olds that could wait the six weeks."

At a news conference Thursday, Gov. Ned Lamont spoke to the complaint filed by Disability Rights Connecticut. He said federal guidelines may not even address what the group wants.

“Their real frustration ought to be with the CDC and the list of comorbidities that are on there and aren’t on there,” said Lamont. “Folks with intellectual and physical disabilities weren’t even listed on the CDC list. It was really surprising.”

Standing next to Lamont on Thursday, Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz said vaccinating those 55 and older will cover about 75% of those with comorbidities in the state.