

DISABILITY ALLIANCE BC

Statement on the BC Government's Lack of Medical Exemptions to the COVID-19 Vaccine Passport

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) wishes to preface our statement by expressing our support with the BC Government's efforts to fully vaccinate British Columbians over 12 years of age against COVID-19. **DABC believes that everyone who can get vaccinated, should get vaccinated in order to stop the spread of COVID-19.**

However, DABC has serious concerns with the recent public health order (PHO) issued by the Ministry of Health and BC's Provincial Health Officer, on August 23rd, 2021. Specifically, DABC takes issue with the PHO that no exemptions will be allowed on medical grounds to access "social, recreational, and discretionary events and businesses"¹ without a vaccine passport providing proof of full vaccination. This recent PHO mandating the use of vaccine passports without providing any accommodation for people who cannot get vaccinated due to their medical condition is blatant discrimination and will further perpetuate the exclusion and disenfranchisement of those affected by this vaccine passport system.

DABC recognizes that there are British Columbians who have made efforts to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19, but have not been given approval by their doctor, allergist or other designated medical professional to do so. DABC understands that in these circumstances, the onus of responsibility lies on these medical professionals to determine the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine for their patient, and not upon the individual. Therefore, this is at no fault of the individuals experiencing this situation.

DABC also recognizes that the number of British Columbians who cannot get vaccinated on medical grounds is small compared to the wider population. Understanding this, implementing exemptions for individuals in

¹ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0053-001659>

this situation would not negatively affect the BC Government's goal of reducing transmission of COVID-19. DABC believes that the BC Government is obligated under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to find a way to accommodate the rights of people with disabilities in this situation, while also mandating a requirement for vaccine passports to ensure the public health safety of our population.

DABC also recognizes that the recent PHO is in reaction to the Delta variant of COVID-19, a more contagious version which has resulted in increased positive cases of COVID-19 in our province in recent weeks, and as such, urgent action has been taken by the BC Government to stop the spread through the implementation of a vaccine passport system. Understanding this, **DABC recommends that the BC Government implement as soon as possible a system of medical exemptions for the Vaccine Passport, to be developed with proactive participation and input by the disability community. Further, DABC recommends that no additional restrictions on accessing other types of services be expanded beyond the current public health order.**