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Mayor Dixon Announced Start of Citywide Campaign to Vaccinate City School Students

Baltimore, MD (November 4, 2009) – Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon joined Interim Health Commissioner Olivia D. Farrow and Baltimore City Public School System CEO Dr. Andrés Alonso today in announcing the start of a campaign to vaccinate thousands of public and private city school students against H1N1 influenza.

“There is a lot of concern in the community about this new virus. Perfectly healthy children are getting very sick very quickly,” Mayor Dixon said. “We must do what is necessary to protect our young people, and the best way to do that is to get them vaccinated for H1N1 flu as soon as possible.”

Consent forms for parents to sign have been sent home with public school students. Parents who want their child to be immunized in school must sign and return the consent form to their child’s school as soon as possible. Several private schools are also participating and will be sending information home to parents.

Children must have a signed consent form to be vaccinated. The campaign will begin this week in five public schools that educate medically-fragile students ages 3 to 21. Many of these students are at especially high-risk for developing complications from influenza. Additional school-based clinics will be scheduled based on the number of signed consent forms returned and geographic proximity of schools. The campaign is expected to be completed within a month’s time.

School vaccination dates will be announced at least three school days in advance. The school system will convey this information to parents. Dates will also be posted on the Health Department Website (www.baltimorehealth.org), and the School Systems’ Website, (www.bcps.k12.md.us/). Children must be marked present and be healthy on this day to receive a vaccination in school.

Private physicians, federally qualified health centers and many retail outlets also are providing flu shots this fall. The Health Department will continue to make the H1N1 and Seasonal flu vaccines available free of charge to the public at community-based clinics. Information on these clinics can be found on the Department's Website, or residents can call 443-984-4FLU (4358) during normal business hours.

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