



Resolution from the PFT Executive Board to the PPS Superintendent and Board of Directors Urging Them to Delay the Start of In-Person Learning Until School Personnel Can Receive Vaccinations

Whereas, in the year since the first documented case of COVID-19 in the United States more than 24,000,000 people in this country have become infected with the SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and more than 400,000 people have died; and

Whereas, in Allegheny County, the currentⁱ level of community transmission of SARS-CoV-2 remains "substantial"ⁱⁱ with a 9.3% positivity rate and an incident rate of 228 per 100,000 residentsⁱⁱⁱ; and

Whereas, the number of daily cases reported in Allegheny County are currently greater than when the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) made the decisions to implement 100% remote instruction in March, August, and November 2020; and

Whereas, the three (3) new variants of SARS-CoV-2 that have emerged independently in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Brazil are more easily transmitted, with the UK variant (B.1.1.7) now reported in 20 states in the U.S.; and

Whereas, the increased transmissibility of the B.1.1.7 variant is predicted to become the predominant virus that causes COVID-19 in the United States in March, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns that "increased compliance with mitigation strategies" and "higher vaccination coverage" are needed to protect against another likely surge in COVID-19^{iv}; and

Whereas, since the beginning of the pandemic, 2.5 million children (12.6% of cases) in the U.S. have tested positive for COVID-19^v; and

Whereas, research is showing SARS-CoV-2 viral loads in children do not differ from adults, indicating that children may be as infectious as adults even though children are less likely to become infected, and have a higher rates of asymptomatic and mild cases^{vi}; and

Whereas, some childhood cases of COVID-19, including mild cases, result in potentially life-threatening multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C)^{vii}; and

Whereas, COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths disproportionately occur among African American, Hispanic, and Indigenous persons^{viii}, and during the pandemic childhood poverty rates are increasing faster for African-American and Hispanic children^{ix}; and

Whereas, in December 2020, two COVID-19 vaccines, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, were given Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after rigorous and completed 3-phase trials that showed high efficacy and minimal side effects^x; and

Whereas, Pennsylvania is currently in Phase 1a of the vaccine distribution, and will soon begin Phase 1b that includes all public school employees; and

Whereas, PPS, Allegheny County, UPMC Health System, and PFT leadership are presently working in collaboration on a comprehensive plan to get our educators vaccinated with their first dose as early as February 1; and

Whereas, PPS has not been able to fill all educator vacancies that currently exist, and some working teachers, other professionals and paraprofessionals who have health conditions that put them at higher risk for serious COVID-19 outcomes should they become infected, will be compelled to apply for leaves of absence if schools are re-opened before the opportunity to receive both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine; and

Whereas, PPS will not be able to adequately staff its schools if it chooses to open schools and/or directs it employees to report to their worksites before there is widespread vaccination among all PPS employees; and

Whereas, understaffed schools have a direct impact on the ability of PPS to deliver its educational programs to students, including the most vulnerable students, while community transmission of COVID-19 is impeding the District's ability to keep students and staff safe; and

Whereas, increasing the possibility of illness, hospitalization, or death from the spread of COVID-19 among students and/or staff while the administration of vaccines are imminent is not well-reasoned, and ending community transmission of COVID-19 is the most effective action we can take towards addressing the learning loss emergency caused by the pandemic and poverty; therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Executive Board of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers issues its strongest recommendation to the Superintendent and the Board of Directors of the Pittsburgh Public Schools to delay all in-person instruction until all school personnel have been given the opportunity to receive both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine; and be it further

RESOLVED that all PFT-represented employees who can work from their residence, continue to do so until the vaccination plan has been implemented.

Adopted unanimously by the PFT Executive Board, January 20, 2021

ⁱ January 8-14, 2021. <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>

ⁱⁱ PA Dept. of Education (PDE) uses the PA Dept. of Health (PaDOH) definition for "substantial" level of community transmission, i.e., ≥ 100 cases per 100,000 residents per most recent 7 days, or $\geq 10\%$ PCR Positivity (7-day average). <https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/ReopeningPreKto12/Pages/DeterminingInstructionalModels.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ PADOH COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System Dashboard. These data are used by the PDE and Pittsburgh Public Schools as the to inform school re-opening decisions. <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>

^{iv} Galloway, Summer E., et. al., Emergence of SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7 Lineage — United States, December 29, 2020–January 12, 2021. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7003e2.htm?s_cid=mm7003e2_e

^v Children and COVID-19: State Data Report; A joint report from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association. Jan 14, 2021. [https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/AAP and CHA - Children and COVID-19 State Data Report 1.14.21.pdf](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/AAP%20and%20CHA%20-%20Children%20and%20COVID-19%20State%20Data%20Report%201.14.21.pdf)

vi Jones TC, Mühlemann B, Veith T, Zuchowski M, Hofmann J, Stein A, et al. An analysis of SARS-CoV-2 viral load by patient age [cited 2020 May 3].

https://zoonosen.charite.de/fileadmin/user_upload/microsites/m_cc05/virologie-ccm/dateien_upload/Weitere_Dateien/analysis-of-SARS-CoV-2-viral-load-by-patient-age.pdf

vii Hall, S., Babies' Mysterious Resilience to Coronavirus Intrigues Scientists. July 14, 2020.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/babies-mysterious-resilience-to-coronavirus-intrigues-scientists/>

viii COVID-19 Hospitalization and Death by Race/Ethnicity. Nov. 30, 2020.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>

ix Child Poverty Rises as Congressional Aid Vanishes. Oct. 20, 2020.

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/blog/child-poverty-rises-as-congressional-aid-vanishes/>

x COVID-19 Vaccines. <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>