



East Providence School Department

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Kathryn M. Crowley
Superintendent of Schools

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To Whom it May Concern,

The Rhode Island Phase One plan for COVID vaccinations includes hospital workers, first responders, and residents and employees of long term care facilities. Left out of Phase One are teachers.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has added teachers to its list of "critical infrastructure workers." Demands are being made, across the country, to return students to classrooms based on sound research that meet student needs, for learning, safety, nutrition and emotional support which are best addressed by in-classroom learning.

Schools have gone to great lengths to follow the CDC protocols for COVID avoidance - social distancing including the creation of pods in which students only interact with small numbers of other students, air circulation, masks, hand washing, sanitation of surfaces, etc.

Parents are instructed to not send their children to school with COVID symptoms. However, particularly in high poverty areas, parents often have to choose between sending a child to school or earning enough money to feed themselves and their children. Sick children are often sent to school.

Distancing, for teachers, is an issue. Teaching is a highly personal endeavor. For teachers to move around a classroom as they observe students working, it becomes difficult or impossible to assist a child from six feet away. Younger children, again especially looking at children living in poverty but in reality all young children, look to teachers for nurturing. They want the physical contact and, at early ages, do not understand why they cannot initiate it. Effective in-classroom teaching and protecting oneself against COVID are essentially mutually exclusive.

If teachers are to be encouraged, or forced, to return to their classrooms as "critical workers" they need to be provided COVID vaccines as protections for themselves based on the hazards, notwithstanding adherence to COVID protocols, of being in classrooms with numerous children.

Teachers should be included along with hospital workers and first responders in Phase One of the vaccine distribution. Teachers' contributions to our COVID pandemic responses, including supporting children and providing critical child care services, need to be recognized and appreciated, especially when these contributions increase the risk of COVID exposure. Providing teachers with protection against COVID is one means of doing so.

This is fully supported by the East Providence School Committee.

Sincerely,

Kathryn M. Crowley
Superintendent of Schools

The East Providence School Department, in partnership with families and the community, is committed to provide a comprehensive, inclusive program of academic excellence in a safe, nurturing environment preparing all students to become responsible, life-long learners able to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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