

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515

December 18, 2020

Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Director Redfield:

As the planning and implementation process for the nation's pandemic response progresses, we urge you to consider adding K-12 educators and school personnel to the list of critical groups of individuals and professionals prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine. While the distribution of these vaccines is a state-controlled endeavor, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) plays an important role in informing the strategies employed to do so.

Every day, over 5 million teachers, administrators, and other school personnel work tirelessly to ensure students receive the educational experiences they deserve. These dedicated individuals and the schools they lead are cornerstones of communities across the country, and the pandemic has made that truth as clear as ever. When COVID-19 prompted abrupt shifts in instruction and school-based services, these professionals responded as they always do, by rising to the occasion, adapting, and delivering for children and families. However, no remote learning can replace what serves students best: engaging, in-person instruction. That reality is even more evident in communities that face long-standing inequities in access to the critical resources – educational or otherwise – needed to support student learning.

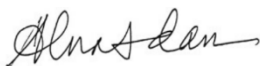
The difficulties associated with remote instruction have prompted many states and localities to try to reopen schools or implement hybrid models. These efforts have led teachers and other personnel to return to educating, caring for, and serving students and families in-person. However, schools reflect the complex communities in which they are situated and, right now, many communities are experiencing high coronavirus transmission rates. This means K-12 professionals inevitably put their lives at greater risk by showing up to support our students. Their essential service deserves to be recognized in our nation's vaccine distribution strategy. Additionally, with over 1.6 million children already infected by COVID-19,¹ it is important to note that prioritizing vaccinations for K-12 professionals not only protects adults, but makes schools safer places for students, too.

¹ <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/>

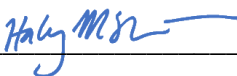
In addition to protecting the health of these essential workers, providing teachers with early access to the vaccine will also help to relaunch our economy. Over 70 percent of working parents with children under 14 lack access to a caregiver at home, representing roughly 23.5 million individuals and nearly 20 percent of the American workforce.² While necessary, pandemic-induced school closures have forced many parents to make painful choices between working to provide for their families and being physically present to care for them. The negative impact this struggle has had on the physical and mental wellbeing of families, especially our most vulnerable, is beyond measure. This situation is only compounded by the dire economic circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. While economic recovery will require multiple, concerted solutions, it will be crucial that we ensure working parents are able to safely remain in or re-enter the workforce. Providing K-12 personnel prioritized access to the COVID-19 vaccine, then, is not just a necessary step toward returning to safe classroom learning, but also toward enabling working parents to safely provide for their families and support the economy.

As has always been the case, the health and prosperity of our country depends, in large part, on the success of our nation's schools and those who selflessly serve in them. Prioritizing COVID-19 vaccinations for K-12 educators and school personnel recognizes the essential work of these professionals, enables a safer return to in-person instruction, and provides the means necessary for tens of millions of workers to breathe life into the American economy. As one of the principal decision-makers in our nation's pandemic response, we strongly encourage you to consider including these professionals in the first phases of the vaccine distribution.

Sincerely,



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



Haley Stevens
Member of Congress



Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress

/s/ Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Bennie G. Thompson

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/ Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

² <https://www.brookings.edu/research/working-parents-are-key-to-covid-19-recovery/>

/s/ André Carson
André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/ Susan Wild
Susan Wild
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/ Steve Cohen
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/ Henry Cuellar
Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

/s/ Andy Levin
Andy Levin
Member of Congress

/s/ Darren Soto
Darren Soto
Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson Lee
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Takano
Mark Takano
Member of Congress

/s/ Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/ Marcy Kaptur
Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

/s/ Bonnie Watson Coleman
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/ Juan Vargas
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/ Barbara Lee
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Frederica S. Wilson
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

/s/ Katherine Clark
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/s/ Jan Schakowsky
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