

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Resolution 21-020 in Support of Expedited COVID-19 Vaccinations for Educators

WHEREAS, as of December 5, 2020, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has infected over 14,367,459 individuals in the United States and has resulted in more than 278,872 deaths across the country, 19,798 in California, 2,109 in the Bay Area; and

WHEREAS, our strong public education system, which is essential to the individual and community well-being of our society, is facing unprecedented challenges due to the Coronavirus pandemic and lack of clear national, state, and local direction or resources. These challenges include, but are not limited to, the academic and social emotional toll on students, as well as the need to rapidly pivot to distance learning; clean and equip school facilities to adapt to new health protocols and social distancing; assess and address the risks to teachers, staff, and students; and

WHEREAS, widespread mask wearing, social distancing, and handwashing are scientifically proven to help prevent the Coronavirus infections; and

WHEREAS, although COVID Testing and contact tracing, currently the only effective strategy available to slow the coronavirus spread prior to the FDA approval of a COVID-19 vaccine, has become more available, it is insufficient to support the public education system in our country, particularly in light of woefully inadequate resources; and

WHEREAS, vaccines are proven to be the most effective strategy to reduce and eliminate the spread of infectious diseases and are an important and necessary tool for eradicating disease; and

WHEREAS, many of the steps our nation has taken to safeguard our communities against COVID-19 have been conditioned upon the development and ultimate availability of a vaccine; and

WHEREAS, once an effective, safe COVID-19 vaccine has been approved by the FDA, federal and state leaders must create a fair, equitable and efficient distribution system; and

WHEREAS, initial vaccine production will not be sufficient for all people to be vaccinated at the outset. A well-managed priority distribution plan must give priority to the most highly vulnerable in the community, including essential workers; and

WHEREAS, workers in a wide variety of settings—healthcare, education, public employment, meat packing and agriculture, among others—are at increased risk of work-related exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. These workers are entitled to all evidence-based protections from exposure at work, including access to a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine; and

WHEREAS, a free and open K-12 public education system is integral to the functioning of our community. When our schools cannot open, children suffer, and many parents and guardians of children who cannot go to school -- many of whom are themselves essential workers -- suffer as well. The inability to safely open schools has threatened the long-term educational outcomes for many students, especially our most vulnerable students; the mental and physical health of many students; the lives and livelihoods of many families in our community; and the local and state economy. The full extent of the ripple effects of an inability to safely open schools are unknown, but undoubtedly significant and tragic; and

WHEREAS, given the unique and critical role that our K-12 public education system plays in the functioning of our community, society, and our democracy, it is critical that teachers and classified staff be prioritized in the first tier of essential workers who are given access to an approved COVID-19 vaccine; and

WHEREAS, if public school personnel are relegated to a later phase of vaccine priority, the ripple effects of school closures will be intensified and prolonged; and

WHEREAS, if, on the other hand, public school personnel are prioritized in the distribution of a safe and effective vaccine, one of the significant challenges to reopening schools, and keeping them open, will be diminished or eliminated; and

WHEREAS, on December 1, 2020, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), based on recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), announced that when a COVID-19 vaccine is authorized by the FDA, the initial distribution phase will prioritize healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities; and

WHEREAS, the California Department of Public Health is currently in the process of developing a COVID-19 Vaccination Plan that will define which essential workers are prioritized in the vaccine distribution plan.

LET IT THEREFORE BE RESOLVED THAT, the Berkeley School Board calls on the State Legislature, the Governor, the California Department of Public Health, and the Public Health Officers of Alameda County and the City of Berkeley, to include all

certificated and classified school personnel as a top priority following healthcare workers and long-term care residents, for access to a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it becomes available.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Berkeley School Board calls on the California School Boards Association to publicly advocate for public school educators to be prioritized in the first tier of essential workers who are given access to an approved COVID-19 vaccine.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Berkeley School Board directs the district clerk to transmit official copies of this resolution to the following: the Superintendent of Alameda County, the City of Berkeley and the Alameda County Public Health Officers, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Governor of California, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, State Senator Nancy Skinner, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, and the California School Boards Association (CSBA).

Passed and adopted by the Board of Education of the Berkeley Unified School District this 9th day of December, 2020.

Ka'Dijah Brown, Director/Clerk
Board of Education
Berkeley Unified School District