

February 24, 2021

Dear Elected Officials:

We write to urge you to advocate vigorously on behalf of getting our teachers and staff vaccinated as soon as possible. This is a pressing concern for our District. As you know, the Chester County Health Department recently revised its guidance to allow for in-classroom instruction with three feet of distance. In response, on February 22, we voted to offer full-time, in-person instruction to all students and families who want it. As is true in most Chester County districts, opinions vary regarding whether this is the right decision. However, the WCASD School Board is united in our desire to ensure that our teachers and staff are safe as they head back into full classrooms and schools.

The CCHD's guidance indicates that transmission rates must be below 100 per 100,000 for three consecutive weeks to allow for full-time in-person instruction at 3 feet of distance. Presuming that the statistics posted by CCHD this Friday indicate rates below 100 and remain there, the earliest our District could return to full-week, in-person instruction would be March 15th. **This gives us a critical 19-day window during which our teachers and staff can be vaccinated.**

We fully understand that Pennsylvania and Chester County do not have enough vaccines to meet demand at this time. The same is true in most states. But, unlike 22 states, Pennsylvania has not prioritized vaccinating its teachers and school staff. Pennsylvania ranks 44th in percent of vaccines distributed, so even the vaccines we do receive are taking too long to be administered. We are far from vaccinating all who are designated as 1a, and most teachers and staff are designated 1b. Even within the 1b category, teachers receive no special priority. This means it could be months before they receive vaccinations. This does not have to be the case. We can, and we should, move our teachers up in the vaccine queue. As other states have taught us, re-opening schools and ensuring the safety of teachers and staff do not have to be mutually exclusive goals.

Pennsylvania can and must do better. The well-being of our children, our families, and our economy is dependent upon a return to school. But we do not need to sacrifice the well-being of our teachers and staff to meet this goal. As our elected officials, you have the power to speak directly to members of the Wolf administration to advocate for rapid vaccination of our teachers and school staff. **We respectfully ask that you relay our urgent request to the administration to get our teachers and staff—a total of 1,488 individuals-- fully vaccinated by March 15th.**

We would be happy to schedule a time to speak with you in-person about this very important request.

Sincerely,

Members of the West Chester Area School Board

Mr. Chris McCune, President

Mrs. Sue Tiernan, Vice President

Mr. Gary Bevilacqua

Ms. Joyce Chester

Mr. Daryl Durnell

Mr. Brian Gallen

Dr. Karen Herrmann

Dr. Kate Shaw

Mr. Randell Spackman