



Date: September 17, 2021

To: Mister Phillips, Chair, WCCUSD Board

Cc: Dr. Kenneth C. Hurst, Sr., WCCUSD Superintendent of Schools

John Gioia, Supervisor, District 1, Contra Costa County

I am writing to express my strong support for a Covid-19 vaccination requirement for all students age 12 and older and all staff of the West Contra Costa Unified School District. The communities served by your district have suffered a disproportionate impact from the Covid-19 pandemic, with higher rates of illness, hospitalization and death than the County as a whole. Vaccination is the best method we have to prevent the transmission of Covid-19 to teachers, staff, students, the families of students and staff, and the wider community. The Covid-19 vaccines that have been granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have been found to be very safe and effective in preventing Covid-19 infection, and even more effective in preventing severe illness, hospitalization and death. The Pfizer vaccine has been granted full FDA approval for ages 16 and up based on even more extensive safety and effectiveness review. It also has a EUA from the FDA for ages 12-15, and the safety profile for this age group is very similar to that of older teens and adults.

In addition to protecting students from becoming ill and spreading Covid-19 to vulnerable adult family and community members, vaccination of the student body has additional benefits for the education of children. Since children who are vaccinated are less likely to develop Covid-19 after an exposure, they are less likely to miss school due to the need to stay home for isolation or symptoms from an infection. Fully vaccinated students are also not required to quarantine at home after an exposure, as long as they remain asymptomatic. In this way vaccination can prevent significant disruptions in a child's education.

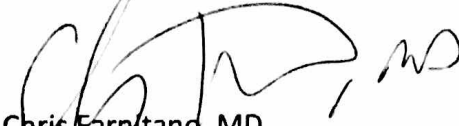
California and other states have a long tradition of requiring vaccinations against contagious diseases in order to keep the classroom a safe environment for children. The first vaccine mandate in U.S. schools was enacted in Massachusetts in the 1850s to prevent smallpox



transmission. By the late 1970s, all 50 states had enacted school vaccination requirements against seven diseases for which vaccines are routinely given in childhood: diphtheria, measles, mumps, pertussis, poliomyelitis, rubella and tetanus. Later, hepatitis b and chicken pox were added to the list of required vaccines. Due to the high vaccination rates of US children against these diseases, it is estimated that 14 million cases of disease and 33,000 deaths in children are prevented each year. Unfortunately, there are still approximately 300 deaths each year in unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated children from these diseases each year. Covid-19 is a current threat to children's health greater than all those diseases combined, due to low vaccination levels in teens and the lack of an authorized vaccine for children under age 12. Since the pandemic began last spring, and as of September 15, 2021, there have been 516 Covid-19 deaths in children from Covid-19 in the US, more than the estimated number of deaths from all the other vaccine preventable diseases listed above combined in the same time period. California state law does not recognize religious or personal belief exemptions for student immunizations, and only accepts valid medical exemptions certified by a California licensed physician. I would recommend that the WCCUSD adopt a similar strict and more health protective policy and only allow medical exemptions for students.

For the safety and health of your students, staff, families and community, I strongly support the WCCUSD requiring Covid-19 vaccination for all students age 12 and older and all district staff.

Sincerely,



Chris Farnitano, MD

Health Officer, Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County Health Services Department

