



December 15, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
1100 San Jacinto Blvd
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Governor Abbott and Members of the COVID-19 Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel:

As you continue your critical decision making to determine the most efficient way to distribute COVID-19 vaccines as they become available, both the Texas Association of School Administrators and the Texas Association of School Boards urge you to consider public school personnel as frontline workers who are given the appropriate priority in the vaccine administration timeline.

Public school employees not only educate more than 5.4 million students across the state, they also provide for the physical and emotional well-being for those children—including those who are the most vulnerable, such as children living in poverty or requiring special education services. In addition, school personnel provide transportation, food services, counseling, nursing, and many other support systems for Texas students. These district employees are contributing their time and energy at great risk to themselves and their loved ones. The State needs to ensure that school personnel are healthy and safe while offering these services.

As a result of the pandemic, educators are concerned that the need for districts to shift from providing in-person instruction to providing partial or full-time virtual instruction is causing many students to fall behind in their education. Covid-19 has also led to a dearth of available substitute teachers who can help when school personnel are following protocols that may call for self-isolation or quarantine. Providing vaccinations to our school personnel is a critical step in ensuring that appropriate school staff is available to provide on-campus instruction and support for those students who most need it.

Further, we believe that classifying school personnel as frontline workers is in alignment with guiding principles to:

- Protect frontline workers who are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of their work providing critical services and preserving the economy, and;
- Account for geographic diversity through a balanced approach that considers access in urban and rural communities and in affected ZIP codes.

Texas public schools have reported almost 49,000 confirmed student cases and almost 29,000 staff cases of the Coronavirus since late July, according to Texas Education Agency data. This data shows that our school personnel are at great risk of contracting COVID-19.

Giving school employees the option to receive a vaccination in the early stages of distribution will also ensure that vaccinations are reaching individuals not only in diverse areas of the state, but in locations that are central to those geographically diverse communities.

For the multitude of reasons outlined in this letter, we urge you to classify public school employees as frontline workers and prioritize them accordingly when considering how and when to distribute COVID-19 vaccines.

Thank you for your service and your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Amy Beneski
Deputy Executive Director
Texas Association of School Administrators



Grover Campbell
Associate Executive Director
Texas Association of School Boards