



February 11, 2021

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Room 225, Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Noe Ortega
Acting Secretary of Education
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Tenth Floor
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

The Honorable Alison Beam
Acting Secretary of Health
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Eighth Floor West
625 Forster Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf, Acting Secretary Ortega, and Acting Secretary Beam:

Today, we write to strongly encourage you to prioritize providing the COVID-19 vaccine to Pennsylvania’s educators, support staff, and school administrators. In our view, ensuring that the men and women who teach and serve Pennsylvania’s children receive the vaccine as soon as possible is absolutely essential if we are to reopen our state’s schools for in-person instruction and return to normal operations when the 2021-22 school year begins.

As you know, a growing number of Pennsylvania school entities are planning to increase the number of students who attend school in person. We know that teaching students in person is by far the best way to provide the highest quality education. However, we also know that the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over.

Scientists and health experts continue to warn against unnecessary personal interactions and gatherings. COVID-19 case counts are more than six times higher than they were on September 10, and the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine has been slow at best.

Unlike 26 other states, Pennsylvania’s vaccination plan does not prioritize school staff members, even though school staff members and students are in a uniquely dangerous position. For those who are delivering in-person instruction, they are gathered in reasonably large groups every day. For those who are preparing to return to school in person, many are very concerned that the state’s

health and safety guidelines, particularly the guidance related to maintaining 6 feet of social distance in school buildings, may be extremely difficult to implement or enforce.

The best way to reduce health risks in schools and reduce reliance on social distancing guidelines is to vaccinate school staff members as soon as possible.

Across Pennsylvania, we know school staff members are anxious about being in close contact with others for 7 hours a day. We also know that many parents want to get their children back into school so that they don't miss the in-person instruction that every student deserves. Of course, everyone is hoping to return to normal operations when the 2021-22 school year begins.

By prioritizing providing the COVID-19 vaccine to school staff members, we can address all of these issues and we can do it quickly. This will offer a new level of safety and confidence for staff members, students, and their families, and help speed the safe reopening of all of Pennsylvania's schools for in-person instruction.

We encourage you to act on this request immediately and stand ready to assist you in making this proposal a reality in any way that we can.

Sincerely,



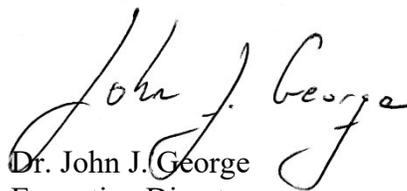
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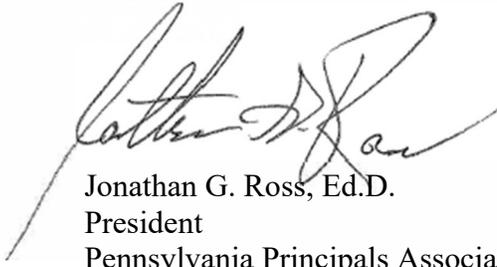
Dr. John J. George
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Nathan Mains
Executive Director
Pennsylvania School Boards Association



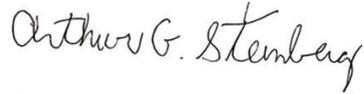
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