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Andrew Spar
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December 16, 2020

Dear Governor DeSantis,

On behalf of the 150,000 members of the Florida Education Association (FEA), I am writing to encourage you to prioritize prekindergarten-12 school and higher education employees in the state vaccination plan. We believe this action is necessary to decrease community spread and to better ensure instructional continuity by reducing the number of education staff who are unable to work because of COVID-related illness.

It is clear from the number of educators and students who have had to isolate at home because of illness or exposure, that our schools remain a source of community spread of COVID-19. With students expected to return to in-person instruction in ever-increasing numbers at the start of the second semester, it is paramount the state stay ahead of any potential increase of COVID-19 in our schools and on our college and university campuses.

Since the first emergency order on reopening of schools, quarantines and isolations have wreaked havoc on school, college and university schedules across the state, with tens of thousands of students, faculty and staff being required to quarantine. Tragically, during that same time period at least 20 educators in Florida have died from COVID, with five of those deaths coming in November and December alone. The surest way to provide students with the educational stability they deserve and to protect the health and wellbeing of Florida's educators is to ensure faculty and staff at their schools have easy and immediate access to vaccination.

This issue goes beyond just teachers: We believe it is critically important for all of our frontline workers in school and higher education settings to have access to the approved vaccinations. Our teachers and staff have been on the front lines of the response to the pandemic by continuing operations and ensuring our children still have all their vital needs met; it is only appropriate that we would be prioritized when it comes to a vaccine effort. Studies have shown that children, teens and young adults are less likely to exhibit COVID-19 symptoms – making teachers and faculty extra susceptible to asymptomatic spread.

Our parents, our students, our staff professionals and the teachers themselves deserve and need to be safe for us to have a healthy functioning community and a healthy functioning economy.

With the holiday season approaching, and the increased travel and gatherings that accompany it, please prioritize our vital teachers, staff and higher education professionals for a vaccination to provide peace of mind to our students, parents, teachers, faculty and communities.

Thank you for your consideration and support. I hope you and your family have a wonderful holiday and happy new year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Spar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the "r".

Andrew Spar
President