



*Solutions  
driven and  
guided by  
our values*

December 18, 2020

## **An Open Letter to Governor Edwards, Dr. Courtney Phillips, Dr. Cade Brumley, BESE and the Louisiana Legislature:**

The difficulties of this year have put an impossible burden on Louisiana's educators. Teachers and support employees have been working around the clock, at great personal sacrifice, to ensure that schools remain open and students receive a high-quality education. They do this for one simple reason: they love their children, but we cannot ask them to continue to carry this burden.

We are all encourage by the recent roll out of a vaccine, finally there is a light on the horizon, but as we wrap up the Fall Semester and look forward towards another five to six months of teaching in a pandemic, we need to do more to relieve this hardship. We respectfully request the following:

### **1. School employees should have no-cost priority access to the vaccine.**

Educators are essential, frontline workers. We depend on their dedication to keep our economy moving and the educational system afloat. They have risked their lives and the lives of their families to do this work, and now that a vaccine is available, they should be given access to it.

Local Education Authorities (LEA) should be mandated to provide all employees with access to the vaccine at no cost to the employees as soon as it becomes available. Furthermore, they should make the vaccine available during work hours at the work site for employees working in person, as well as the option to receive the vaccine at no cost with their chosen healthcare provider.

All employees should be educated on the full range of risks and benefits of vaccination, as well as the known efficacy rates and side effect so that they can make an informed decision about what is best for themselves and their families.

### **2. Educators and parents should be given clear information concerning the CDC's updated quarantine guidelines.**

As was discussed in the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Meeting on December 15, 2020, the decision to shorten quarantine time to 10 days with a positive test result and 7 days with a negative test result comes with risks.

# **Louisiana Federation of Teachers**

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The shortened quarantine-time increases transmission risk. With a 14-day quarantine, risk of transmission is almost completely eliminated. With a 10-day quarantine, transmission risk increases up to 10%. A 7-day quarantine puts increased pressure on testing resources, especially where tests are limited, and could therefor increase transmission up to 12%.

Most importantly, the shortened quarantine guidelines increase the need for people to strictly mask and maintain physical distance. In some settings this is challenging especially among the very youngest children, or simply because of the physical constraints presented by over-crowded classrooms.

3. **Extend Protections from the Families First Coronavirus Reponses Act (FFCRA or CARES Act) Beyond December 31, 2020**

Funding from the FFCRA helped to equip local school districts with resources and supplies that have reduced the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, it required certain employers to provide employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19 to help ensure that employees would be able to quarantine and protect those around them, without being forced to take unpaid time off. These provisions will expire on December 31, 2020. We ask that the Governor and Legislature petition Congress to extend the FFCRA to ensure access to this vital funding and necessary paid time off to quarantine.

However, we cannot rely on the U.S. Congress to take action to extend these protections, so it is imperative that Louisiana’s LEAs be required to continue to provide paid time off to any employee forced to quarantine. Otherwise, schools we could face a crisis where employees are financially unable to quarantine when necessary and thus further spread COVID-19 in our schools.

Sincerely,

*Larry J. Carter Jr.*

Larry J. Carter Jr.  
President  
Louisiana Federation of Teachers & School Employees

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epi.org/blog/nearly-20-million-jobs-lost-by-july-due-to-the-coronavirus/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.economy.com/getlocal?q=37F6F320-EF2A-4806-9AAB-EADE66FA0317&app=download>