

*The Board of Supervisors of
Contra Costa County, California*

In the matter of:

Resolution No. 2020/344

In the Matter of urging Governor Newsom and the California Department of Public Health to prioritize California public school educators for phase one COVID-19 vaccine access.

WHEREAS, As of December 7, 2020 the California Department of Public Health has reported at least 1,389,707 confirmed COVID-19 cases in California, and a total of 20,047 deaths in the state; and

WHEREAS, In the early stages of the pandemic, local and state public health orders required the closure of public schools across the state to slow the spread of coronavirus in the community; and

WHEREAS, Despite the unprecedented nature of the public health crisis, school districts and educators across the state stepped up and adapted to the significant challenges caused by school closures by shifting towards new online distance learning formats; and

WHEREAS, Even with innovative distance learning measures put in place, COVID-19 school disruptions have had an adverse effect on K-12 learning, especially among low-income students and students of color, with data showing a higher failure rate at schools with a higher percentage of students on free or reduced lunch programs; and

WHEREAS, While schools have been closed for nearly 9 months, state officials have failed to prioritize enough resources to support safe school reopening as a part of the state's COVID recovery efforts and many school districts remain closed with no clear timelines or commitments for reopening in the near future; and

WHEREAS, Public school enrollment has begun to decline across the state and country, with many families being forced to leave public school districts to enroll in private and independent schools systems that have managed to reopen schools with government authorization and safety protocols in place; and

WHEREAS, School closures have had extreme ramifications on student achievement including cutting student learning time, limiting the ability of educators to provide their usual level of support, diminishing opportunities for students to develop their social and emotional skills, and increasing rates of anxiety, depression, obesity, and other serious health conditions among students; and

WHEREAS, These educational consequences from school closures are exponentially worse at understaffed and underfunded schools across the state that traditionally serve large populations of students of color and their families, who were already facing stark achievement gaps prior to the COVID crisis; and

WHEREAS, The disproportionate health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on Black, Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Native American families, including higher rates of job loss and COVID-19 infections compounded by limited access to

technology and reliable internet access, have only exacerbated the educational challenges that students of color have had to endure during this crisis; and

WHEREAS, If we do not act with greater urgency to resolve these disruptions to our public education system, the severe learning deficits caused by school closures could have lasting impacts on our students including persistent behavioral and academic challenges, grade repetition, and increases in school truancy, suspension, expulsion, and dropouts rates longer term; and

WHEREAS, For many working families, the continued closure of schools has forced many parents and caregivers to make an impossible choice between leaving their jobs and foregoing their family's income, or leaving their children home alone without the care or supervision of an adult; and

WHEREAS, There is general agreement among parents, educators, school administrators, and public health professionals that schools should be able to reopen as long as the rates of COVID-19 transmission remain low in the general population, and there is adequate school testing, screening, monitoring, sanitation, personal protective equipment, and emergency response protocols in place to ensure that educators and students can safely return to an in-person school setting; and

WHEREAS, Providing vaccines to all school site personnel, including teachers, paraprofessionals, janitors, and other support staff, will be key to reopening schools safely and efficiently; and

WHEREAS, Several pharmaceutical companies have released recent reports showing promising results that vaccines protecting against the COVID-19 virus may become available to priority populations as early as December 2020 following authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Institutes of Health, there are enough vaccines available to vaccinate up to 20 million people in the United States in December and those doses are likely to be distributed based on state conditions and population size; and

WHEREAS, Because initial vaccine supply will be limited, California state health officials are developing a phased distribution plan in partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that will establish the priority populations for vaccination; and

WHEREAS, The state has indicated that health care workers and first responders who are likely to treat or be exposed to COVID-19 patients are expected to be the first phase of vaccine recipients, and these workers are being divided into subgroups in case of a shortage in the first rounds; and

WHEREAS, The definition of an essential worker in the distribution guidance is still being developed by state health officials; and

WHEREAS, Public School educators are arguably among the most essential workers in our society as they not only provide an education, but also serve to protect children from hunger and other social ills, give children purpose, set them up for success as citizens, and inspire them to succeed in life; and

WHEREAS, While educators are generally considered essential workers, it is still unclear where educators will fall in the state's priority ranking, which will be decided in the coming weeks; and

WHEREAS, European countries like France have prioritized keeping schools open citing their commitments to minimize the academic harm of school closures, while the United States has prioritized reopening bars and retail establishments as schools have remained closed; and

WHEREAS, Education is the cornerstone of our democracy, and at a time when our democratic institutions are under attack, we have a moral obligation to protect the integrity of our educational institutions by ensuring that they are well resourced and equipped to overcome the current and future challenges presented by the COVID-19 health crisis;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors urges Governor Newsom, the California Department of Public Health, and all other state health officials to prioritize the recovery of our public education system by providing teachers and school support staff with vaccines immediately after health care professionals so that we can safely reopen schools and get students back into the classroom as soon as possible with a priority for teachers in school districts that have submitted reopening plans; and FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors urges Governor Newsom, the California Department of Public Health, and all other state health officials to ensure that the costs of COVID-19 vaccines for all educators and school support staff be subsidized by our state and federal government to ensure equitable and timely access to these vaccines; and FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors hereby directs the Clerk of the Board to transmit copies to the Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom and to the California Department of Public Health with a request to take all actions necessary to achieve the objectives of this Resolution.

CANDACE ANDERSEN
Chair, District II Supervisor

JOHN GIOIA
District I Supervisor

DIANE BURGIS
District III Supervisor

KAREN MITCHOFF
District IV Supervisor

FEDERAL D. GLOVER
District V Supervisor

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: December 15, 2020

David J. Twa,

By: _____, Deputy