



February 16, 2021

Dear Dr. Do-Reynoso and Dr. Ansorg,

We, the leaders of Santa Barbara Teachers Association (SBTA) and local Chapter 37 of the California School Employees Association (CSEA) recognize the challenges related to the supply of vaccines and also the logistical challenges of coordinating the vaccination process. We thank you for the hard work your organization has done in that process. We are writing to you on behalf of the critical and essential workforce of the Santa Barbara Unified School District. As you are aware, SBUSD is poised to return to in-person learning for all students and staff across nine elementary schools as early as February 26 - without vaccines. This return to in-person learning will bring together, for the first time, hundreds of the 800 certificated and 750 classified staff in our district and 3,524 elementary students. Hundreds of staff members have already been working at schools for months. A number of them have been or continue to be exposed to or infected by COVID-19, and now, very tragically, one has died due to complications from COVID. We urge Santa Barbara County decision-makers to **prioritize, with immediacy, the offering of vaccines to school personnel.**

The ultimate goal of reopening schools is, of course, focused on our students' academic growth and social and emotional welfare. Our K-12 schools serve as the critical core - the true heart and soul - of every community. This pandemic has made that more evident than ever. Closed schools have a profound impact on the ability of businesses and their employees to thrive. Campuses provide a safe and nurturing place for children, allowing the rest of society to focus on day-to-day business and life. Not only do we teach students, but we feed them, we take care of them after school, and we give stability in their lives. Prioritizing the vaccination of our 1500 school staff would have dramatic, positive ripple effects on the economic and emotional health of our entire community. In turn, parents and caregivers could then participate more fully in the workforce and help businesses return to a more viable state. As educators, we are the professionals who are key to the growth and development of the children of Santa Barbara. Protecting and respecting our educators by including them now in the vaccination rollout sends an important signal to all about the critical role education plays in our community and society. We need our students and teachers safely back in school

immediately to begin working together - with parents - to heal, grow and move forward as a collective community. Vaccinating us could go a long way towards alleviating many of the challenges that almost every sector of our community has faced during this pandemic.

We have seen examples of cities like ours that have effectively prioritized school staff for vaccinations. For example the City of Long Beach, CA began vaccinating over 12,000 educators and school staff at the end of January before reopening schools. We know that SBUSD has offered to provide locations and logistical assistance should it be needed. It seems that with a well-coordinated plan, within two or three days, SBUSD school staff could receive vaccines. Protecting this essential group of adults would profoundly affect tens of thousands of citizens in our community who are connected to public schools. Please prioritize school staff now for the safety and benefit of the community as a whole .

Sincerely,

Karen McBride

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