



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
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REPRESENTATIVE VINCENT J. CANDELORA
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January 2, 2021

Dear Dr. Gifford and Dr. Eadie,

We appreciate all the hard work and progress made by the Vaccine Advisory Group to prioritize and coordinate the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines to the residents of Connecticut during these unprecedented times. Members of the House Republican caucus believe that preventing morbidity and mortality is the first priority and anyone age 55 or older or those with underlying medical conditions should be offered vaccines immediately. However, as the Advisory Group shifts focus to restoring societal functioning, we strongly urge you, and ultimately the Governor, to fully consider teachers and school employees ages 55 or older as essential employees and ensure that guidelines and systems are made available to allow them to receive vaccinations as soon as possible.

Vaccinating school staff addresses not only the health needs of our residents, but also gives school children the opportunity to return to a classroom full-time after spending nearly two school years between virtual and hybrid school settings. Countless numbers of teachers have expressed to us concern over the lack of opportunities to educate remotely while they are quarantined and the lack of paid leave for employees to care for a child not able to attend school or daycare due to COVID-19 closures. While we are sympathetic to their specific requests for paid quarantine leave and paid family leave, such requests at this time are complicated by collective bargaining agreements and past efforts from our caucus to address matters like this through the legislative process were denied by democrat leaders.

However, we find it timely to share their concerns because it demonstrates the fear and anxiety that our constituents face and the cascading effect that school closures have on the rest of society. Allowing teachers to get vaccinated would increase their confidence and encourage parents and students to return to a normal school environment.

Thank you for taking the opportunity to listen to the concerns of our caucus and our educators. We anxiously await the Advisory Groups' recommendations.

Sincerely,

Vincent Candelora
House Republican Leader Elect