

**LETTER TO BUCKS COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
FROM BUCKS COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT, BUCKS COUNTY SCHOOL
SUPERINTENDENTS and CTC DIRECTORS**

January 22, 2021

Dear Bucks County Legislator:

I am writing on behalf of the school districts, career technical centers (CTCs), and intermediate unit of Bucks County to ask for your help in obtaining COVID-19 vaccine for our approximately 17,000+ Bucks County school employees. Your advocacy in securing the vaccine for our essential school workers will protect our county's students and staff from the very virus that has disrupted education since March 2020. Vaccinating our essential school workers will also provide every school in Bucks County with another tool to use in its work to reliably return to and maintain full-time, in-person instruction. With schools at the center of our shared community, prioritizing essential school workers for vaccination will be a necessary step in regaining the sense of normalcy our students and parents lost nearly a year ago.

Below, please find an outline of a comprehensive plan that we have already shared with leadership from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH). **If, with your assistance, we can successfully secure sufficient doses of the vaccine from DOH, our plan offers a unique way for the schools to self-administer the vaccine for our workforce using the very infrastructure we already have in place. Our plan will reduce the burden placed on our county's local hospitals and health department by vaccinating this large portion of our county's population. Bucks County will shine across the Commonwealth (and across the Country) as an example of what happens when agencies work together in the face of adversity to serve their shared community.** We are hopeful that, with your outreach on our behalf, this plan can become a reality and our schools can begin to take the necessary steps towards normalcy as soon as possible.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the school entities of Bucks County have worked in partnership with the Bucks IU, the Bucks County Health Department, Bucks County Emergency Services, the six (6) local hospitals, and BCHIP (the vehicle for coordination and collaboration among the hospitals in Bucks County).

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- This collaboration has resulted in regular communication and the sharing of best practices across organizations specific to the necessary health and safety considerations needed to operate our schools in-person.
- As a result of this collaboration, schools throughout Bucks County have successfully reopened to hybrid and in-person instruction with great success.
- The school leaders in Bucks County see vaccination as a priority for keeping schools open; we are ready to make an investment in time and resources to vaccinate our teams.

With Pennsylvania Department of Health support, many school entities within Bucks County stand ready to self-administer the vaccines to our nearly 20,000 1B eligible school staff members using our school nurses and our school infrastructure.

- Our schools employ teams of nurses, many of whom have already agreed to participate in administering the vaccine to their colleagues. The Bucks IU has also approached a third-party school nurse staffing agency to meet any staffing needs for such a project.
- The Bucks County Health Department and many of our local hospital partners have agreed to train our school nurses on the proper vaccination procedures from start-to-finish.
- Schools excel in planning and running large scale events. Next to educating children, it's one of the things we do best. With support from our local hospital partners and the Bucks County Health Department, we have the experience and expertise to manage a large-scale project like this.
- Those school entities and hospitals that choose to leverage our existing school infrastructure and staff to vaccinate school employees will significantly reduce the burden on our already overtaxed local hospital systems.

The total number of 20,000 school-related individuals in phase 1B is an aggregate number of staff from Bucks County's public-school districts, nonpublic schools, career technical centers, and intermediate unit.

- There are approximately 17,681 educators who work for the thirteen public school districts, three career technical centers (CTCs), and the Intermediate Unit in Bucks County.
- There are approximately another 2,062 educators who work for the nonpublic schools in Bucks County.
- This number does not include community-based pre-schools or childcare providers.
- Each entity has or is in the process now of surveying each staff member for their interest in receiving the vaccine, should it be made available through this initiative. We suspect there will be the standard percentage of these individuals who choose to decline the vaccine.

Those school entities within Bucks County seeking to hold on-site, in-school vaccine clinics for their staff will seek support from their respective local hospitals, the Bucks County Health Department, and the Bucks IU. While each district-hospital partnership

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may look different in some ways, generally speaking, the districts and Bucks County Health Department are asking the hospitals to:

- order, store, and oversee the transport of the vaccines to site locations;
- train school nurses on the proper administration of the vaccine;
- help with data management; and
- consult on the design and process of any in-school vaccination clinics.

We recognize the volume of our request and welcome phased allocations of the vaccine. As each school entity coordinates with its hospital partner, the Bucks County Health Department and Bucks IU can help coordinate the timing and distribution.

- As one example, the school entities served by Doylestown Health (Central Bucks School District, New Hope-Solebury School District, Middle Bucks Institute of Technology, the Bucks IU, and various nonpublic schools) employ about 6,000 individuals. In this example, significant planning is well underway among the entities that can be replicated with other hospitals in Bucks County and throughout the Commonwealth.
- Similar partnerships and data are available for the other regions of the County by hospital and by school entity.

We are seeking support from DOH specific to vaccine-specific data management for reporting and tracking any vaccines we self-administer.

- We believe that such support from DOH will streamline the registration process and related DOH data entry requirements without the need for redundant or unnecessary data entry.
- Support from DOH on how to facilitate these vaccine-related data requirements will better facilitate our local efforts to successfully register, administer, schedule, and track the vaccinations.

In the event we have DOH's support for this model, we are also seeking clarity to the following questions:

- Will the school entities need their own "location" from DOH to receive the vaccine? Or would the Bucks County Health Department and/or local hospitals be able to accept delivery for the schools and then "reposition" the vaccine to and from the school locations that opt for an in-school clinic each day?
- We recognize that "Vaccine Redistribution" is a different scenario that would require a form to be submitted to and approved by DOH prior to moving vaccine between non-owned entities, (meaning those that don't share a common DOH Part A Vaccine Provider Application).

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The Bucks IU, as the region's educational service agency, will document our processes in order to provide similar support to any other Intermediate Unit in the Commonwealth.

- Doing so will help any interested intermediate unit or consortium of schools in the Commonwealth to replicate this approach to vaccinating school staff within their respective regions.

Thank you for your consideration of the above requests. Please know that the leadership teams from the Bucks County Health Department, the hospitals, and the schools stand ready to provide any additional information and to participate in conversations with you and the DOH to advance this work.

You'll find the signature of every superintendent and CTC Director in Bucks County below. We believe in this initiative and appreciate your support!

My best,



Mark Hoffman, Ed.D.
Executive Director, Bucks County Intermediate Unit

Bucks County School Superintendents and Career Technical Center Directors
(Signature Page Attached)

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Bucks County School Superintendents



Dr. Samuel Lee, Superintendent
Bensalem School District



Dr. Rob McGee, Superintendent Neshaminy
School District



Dr. Rose Minniti, Superintendent
Bristol Borough School District



Dr. Charles Lentz, Superintendent New Hope-
Solebury School District



Dr. Melanie Gehrens, Superintendent
Bristol Township School District



Dr. Bridget O'Connell, Superintendent
Palisades School District



Dr. Dana Bedden, Superintendent
Centennial School District



Dr. David Bolton, Superintendent
Pennridge School District



Dr. John Kopicki, Superintendent
Central Bucks School District



Dr. William Gretzula, Superintendent
Pennsbury School District



Dr. Robert Fraser, Superintendent
Council Rock School District



Dr. William E. Harner, Superintendent
Quakertown Community School District



Mr. Jason Harris, Superintendent School
District of Borough of Morrisville

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Bucks County Schools Career Technical Centers Directors



Dr. Leon Poeske, Ed. D.
Administrative Director, Bucks County Technical High
School



Kathryn Strouse
Administrative Director, Middle Bucks Institute of
Technology



Jeff Sweda
Executive Director, Upper Bucks County Technical School