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# RUBEN CORTEZ, JR.

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, DISTRICT 2

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December 3, 2020

Gov. Greg Abbott  
Texas Capitol  
1100 Congress Ave, 25.1  
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Governor Abbott,

Like many Texans, I am encouraged by the news that a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine will soon be available to help us fight this deadly virus. I appreciate your office's swift actions to release guidance outlining how vaccines will be made available, and I hope this will aid in their orderly, efficient, and equitable distribution.

The guiding principles established by the Expert Vaccine Allotment Panel (EVAP) appropriately prioritize making vaccines available to frontline workers and vulnerable populations who voluntarily choose to be vaccinated. While some school employees have been empowered to transition to virtual settings, many have been meeting face-to-face with students, parents, and other staff since the summer. Many, if not most, school employees had no say in the matter, yet these community heroes have faithfully staffed our campuses every day, even as case counts soared.

According to the most recent data from the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas Education Agency, 31,678 public school students and 18,742 school employees have tested positive for COVID-19 as of the week ending November 15. The number of new cases reported by school districts has increased steadily since the school year began and has nearly doubled in the past two weeks.

Public school employees are clearly frontline workers and deserve protection as such. For this reason, I urge you to include them in the official EVAP definition of frontline workers and ensure that public school employees who voluntarily choose to be vaccinated are given priority access.

Thank you for your continued efforts as we work together to keep Texas safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ruben Cortez, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ruben Cortez, Jr.  
State Board of Education, District 2