

August 5, 2021

Kirsten Johnson
City of Milwaukee Commissioner of Health
841 N. Broadway, 3rd Floor
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Ms. Johnson,

We write today on behalf of the nearly 5,200 members of MTEA and the MPS students and families that we serve. The past year and a half have been extremely hard, but this summer held some hope for the future. Our members have looked forward to a return to some normalcy, but now we are deeply concerned with the precipitous increase in COVID-19 cases with Milwaukee's rates blowing past Red (High Transmission), going straight from Orange to Purple (Extreme Transmission). We are also deeply concerned with the vaccination rate continuing to hover around 50% for numerous weeks, with the most economically deprived communities we serve at much lower rates. For example, the 53206 zip code has just 26.4% of residents who have completed the vaccine series, according to DHS' website.

MTEA has continued to work with the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to plan for the 2021-2022 school year through the summer. MPS continues to require masks to be worn indoors, will maintain 3-foot distancing per CDC guidance, will continue to maintain HEPA air purifiers in occupied spaces and has taken measures to improve ventilation, has opted into DHS' school testing program where symptomatic individuals should be tested with consent, and has continued emergency COVID leave for employees. Unfortunately, this is above and beyond any measures that MHD has required of all schools in Milwaukee. But more importantly, with the current surge of COVID spread in Milwaukee, we are concerned that these measures will not be enough to protect students, many who cannot be vaccinated, and staff when variants are more contagious and resistant to the vaccines.

MTEA calls on the Milwaukee Health Department to act quickly to create new guidance and enact requirements for all Milwaukee schools. For schools, the CDC recommends that "(l)ocalities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing)." Time is of the essence as students in early start schools return on August 16th (though high school freshman have already returned this week for freshman bridge). We believe that serious and consistent requirements for all schools should include masking, distancing, improved ventilation, as well as the establishment of enforceable metrics for when remote instruction should take place to contain outbreaks and an elevated regime for testing, isolation, and contact tracing



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until Milwaukee returns to low transmission and the vaccine has been widely distributed to all students.

MTEA remains committed to act to defend our schools and communities and we stand ready to work with MHD to fight COVID-19. We await your response and action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Ward".

Ben Ward, MTEA Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Mizialko".

Amy Mizialko, MTEA President