



January 29, 2021

Dear Governor Gianforte, Dr. Holzman, and General Quinn,

A key part of reopening our economy is to get teachers and support staff/teaching teams vaccinated as quickly as possible. “We’re not going to get back to normal until we get children back into school, both for the good of the children, for the good of the parents, and for the good of the community,” Dr. Fauci stated, “(Anthony Fauci: ‘Get Teachers Vaccinated as Quickly as We Possibly Can’ (edweek.org)).

It was reported 1/26/2021 that Cutbank school district had to send all their students home due to many positive Covid-19 cases. Forcing them to cancel all sporting events and transition back to remote learning until February 8, 2021. Please, Governor Gianforte, reconsider the state’s vaccination plan. The parents and guardians of these kids who are working as nurses, teachers, business owners and their workers, and other essential workers, must now scramble and, most likely, have to miss work to find care for them, get them fed, and continue their schooling remotely. Many of these parents and essential workers will be unable to work due to quarantine requirements and this will significantly impact the economy of this and other communities with like experiences.

MNA encourages our Governor to follow current CDC guidelines and observe the best scientific evidence available to us to fully open schools by moving teachers, essential workers and support staff, and daycare workers back to 1b along with keeping those modification of people over 70 years of age in 1b (as your office stated, those over 70 have accounted for 75% of MT deaths), furthermore, keeping our American Indians and other people of color in 1b. Vaccinating frontline and essential workers will protect those most vulnerable under 70, as well as curb the asymptomatic spread. However, with a limited amount of vaccine available, the best protection we have for those most vulnerable, aged 16-69 (which is 250,000+ Montanans), right now is following our current **mitigation efforts**: to socially distance, wash hands, stay home (don’t gather in large groups), and most importantly, wear a mask.

Vaccinating the teachers and their teams, along with the essential frontline workers in addition with this large group of Montanans will be problematic due to the amount of available vaccine and postponing that group (following CDC guidelines, putting them back into 1c) is not because we don’t value them, it is because we do value them, however, Montana doesn’t have enough doses to adequately protect them until the vaccines become more **widely available**. We need to be more strategic so we **can meaningfully** vaccinate this large population of Montanans.



In the meantime, we need to consider the exposure risk our teachers and workers face every day! The most current numbers from OPI (Facts about Montana Education 2020) is 10,686 licensed teachers (classroom, Title 1, and SpEd), 129 other educator staff, 994 education specialists (library, guidance counselor, etc.) and 2,948 paraprofessionals. This group of teachers/staff are approx. 14,757 plus, and due to vaccine limitations, would be far more realistic to get **vaccinated quickly** and open up the classrooms which benefits our children and their working parents/guardians.

Montana communities need our support. We must be realistic with the vaccine doses knowing that categories will start to meld as we get more vaccines allocated and into the arms of those who need it first and focus on mitigation efforts to protect one of our largest most vulnerable populations.

MNA thanks you in advance for your consideration.

Most Sincerely,

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