



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Michelle Michalak

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michalakm@madisonteachers.org

## **Continue to Reopen Schools — Safely and with Vaccines**

*MTI calls on local and state officials to prioritize vaccines for workers who must work directly with others and to provide adequate funding for vaccines and other protective measures. This will protect lives, especially for our communities of color.*

MTI members want to return to our classrooms, schools, and worksites to continue supporting the instructional, social, and emotional needs of our students. However, **we must do whatever it takes to ensure the maximum preservation of life, health and safety of our students, families, and colleagues as the highest priority.** The bond of Solidarity within our community to successfully address the many challenges we face has never been stronger.

“During this time of crisis, we must unite around the safety and health of all who work and learn in our schools. With approximately 26,000 students and 5,000 staff members in our district, this decision impacts everyone. Students' learning conditions are our working conditions,” stated MTI President Andrew Waity.

**Our community needs to be vaccinated; including the need for specific focus on communities of color who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.** As of [today](#), 17.2% of our Dane County residents have received the first dose of the vaccine and 10.2% of residents have received the second dose. There is an unacceptable disparity in vaccine recipients; 5.9% of Latinx-identifying residents and 8.4% of Black residents have received the vaccination, compared to 16% of white residents. Prioritizing MTI members who work in-person will help address these disparities, because our members reflect the diversity of our community.

We are disappointed by the recent Dane County Public Health announcement that the county will not start offering teachers and childcare workers the COVID-19 vaccine for at least two weeks due to a lack of adequate vaccine supply. Tragically, the effect of this decision delays access for many Black and Brown workers - many who are already working in person. Leaving workers unvaccinated poses a risk to the workers, their families, and the community.

**MTI is calling on local, state, and federal officials to make vaccines and other resources for mitigation of the pandemic, broadly and equitably available to school districts and institutions of higher education - especially the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), NOW!**

Additionally, MTI believes MMSD staff who have been working in person and staff scheduled to return to in-person, be immediately prioritized in the vaccination process. Vaccinations may, in fact, be close at hand, but remain out of reach for far too many working people in our City. We believe that the current public health plan for vaccine distribution further exacerbates the glaring inequities existing across racial and socioeconomic lines, brought into the sunshine during the pandemic.

MTI aligns with the National Education Association (NEA), which is clear about what is required for safe schools:

*"Making safe in-person instruction a reality requires federal mandates and resources that compel and allow school districts and institutions of higher education to put in place the mitigating measures necessary to protect against COVID-19. The two most promising developments in the battle against COVID-19—vaccines and rapid COVID-19 tests—can be game changers for safe in-person instruction, and federal and state authorities should make them broadly and equitably available. Both must be accompanied by the robust COVID-19 mitigation strategies that the CDC knows must be in place as a starting point for schools to be safe. The National Education Association strongly stands behind educators who have determined that they need access to COVID-19 vaccines to ensure that their workplaces are safer, whether they are currently working in person or will be returning to school buildings, and educators need to have access to COVID-19 vaccines now, period."*

We agree that all who are able to work from home or do not have to interact with the public, must let our fellow Wisconsinites that have a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 get vaccinated first. In the best interest of our students, our families, and community, MTI is advising our members working in-person and those scheduled to return in-person instruction, to immediately contact their health care providers, their community pharmacy, or other pharmacies participating in the Federal Retail Pharmacy program and request access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

From day one of the pandemic, MTI members have placed the health and safety of our community as the top priority. We demand Public Health Madison & Dane County, the Department of Health Services, along with elected officials including the Mayor, the Wisconsin state Legislature, the Governor, the President and Congress to act ensuring our community receives full and equitable COVID-19 vaccinations - **NOW!**

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MTI is a member-led and democratic organization that represents 3,000+ employees who work for the Madison Metropolitan School District. MTI has maintained a strong voice on wages, benefits, and working conditions while advocating on issues of racial and social justice.

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madisonteachers.org

608.257.0491

[mti@madisonteachers.org](mailto:mti@madisonteachers.org)