

The Honorable Brian Kemp
Governor of Georgia
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp,

We come to you as a united group to ask for your help in affirming that teachers are valued in Georgia. Like you, we know the challenges and difficulties of leading during a pandemic, and we remain hopeful that the COVID-19 vaccination will soon begin to positively impact the lives and futures of many within our state. It is this hope that motivates us to come together as we have done so often throughout this pandemic. With the deepest respect but also the strongest sense of urgency, we ask you to move our teachers and education staff into the 1A category.

Our schools have always been a source of stability and safety to students and families. Though our districts have chosen different paths and approaches to reopening this school year, we have all been unwavering in our belief that children need teachers and schools. For many children, there is no replacement or substitute for in-person/face-to-face learning from an educator. As superintendents, we hear each day from families who implore us to not return to a full virtual model; likewise, we hear each day from teachers who are scared about the threat of COVID-19 to them and their loved ones. At its heart, a school is a group of students and a group of educators; the magic that happens depends on both groups being together.

We need your help because our ability to remain open depends significantly on our staff feeling safe and staying healthy. The longer we delay in vaccinating our teachers and school staff, the more we risk having to close our doors once again. The educators in our districts have given tirelessly in time, effort, and dedication, especially during the pandemic; we ask you to recognize their value and importance to our communities and our state. Prioritize their role in children's lives and reinforce the importance of our schools by doing what is needed to keep them safe and keep our schools open: allow teachers to be vaccinated now.

On behalf of the students, families, and educators of the districts we are honored to serve, we thank you for your time and consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools
Dr. Robert Downs, Superintendent, Buford City Schools
Dr. Morcease Beasley, Superintendent, Clayton County Schools
Mr. Chris Ragsdale, Superintendent, Cobb County Schools
Dr. David Dude, Superintendent, City Schools of Decatur
Mrs. Cheryl Watson-Harris, Superintendent, DeKalb County Schools
Dr. Jeff Bearden, Superintendent, Forsyth County Schools
Dr. Mike Looney, Superintendent, Fulton County Schools
Mr. Alvin Wilbanks, Superintendent, Gwinnett County Schools
Dr. Grant Rivera, Superintendent, Marietta City Schools
Dr. Terry Oatts, Superintendent, Rockdale County Schools