

Wheatland Union High School District

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Nicole Newman, Superintendent



January 29, 2021

Open Letter to Dr. Phoung Luu, Bi-County Health Officer

I want to first say that I am not trying to be adversarial or confrontational. I am simply passionate about education and the students and staff in the community where I serve as superintendent.

Three weeks ago, you met with myself and other superintendents in Yuba and Sutter Counties and we were planning the vaccinations of all educators in our bi-county area. This was the direction from the Governor, and you were following his direction. On January 16th, several of us were vaccinated because we would be helping on our campuses with vaccination clinics run by our school staff.

On January 19th, the school district superintendents received devastating news from you. The guidance had been changed, and it was your duty to follow the guidance and begin vaccinating ONLY 65+ year-olds even though you understood why we felt the way we did; however, there was nothing you could do - it was the guidance.

Monday, January 25th, the Governor said in his news conference that "educators have equal priority "alongside" seniors 65 and over to receive the vaccine". We met at 2:00 p.m. on Monday following the news conference believing there was light at the end of this tunnel, and we would be getting our educators vaccinated. That was not the case. You told us you would not be following the direction given from the Governor's office and educators would not be given equal priority and would have to wait. You stated that it was your "moral imperative" to take care of the 65+ year-olds first as they are the group that is most critical to vaccinate due to death rates among 65+ year-olds.

While I do not disagree with you, I do not understand how you can make choices to follow the Governor's guidance one day and then decide that you are not going to follow it the next. How do we explain this to our educators who know what came from the Governor on Monday - that now they can run "alongside" 65+ - but, not if you are in Yuba or Sutter County.

There are many districts that have already vaccinated their educators. This is a terrible precedent to make. We already serve students in two of the poorest counties in the state (20.8 percent below the poverty level in Yuba County and 17.5 percent below the poverty level in Sutter County). The inequities in education are going to be astounding in the coming years. All students need to be back in school. Many already are and we are doing our best to follow the

guidance from the California Department of Public Health and CDC; however, the vaccine for educators is critical to getting all students back on campus.

Not only do we need to be worrying about learning loss, we need to be worrying about the mental health of our youth. Suicide rates among young adults in the past few years have doubled. My moral imperative is to the students! Again, I understand where you are coming from, but all I am asking is for you to follow the Governor's direction and let our educators run alongside 65+ year-olds.

I am one who believes you do not come and speak about a problem without a solution. Please read the article mentioned in the joint letter about Nevada County vaccinating all educators. I have run the numbers, and if we start by looking at ONLY the districts that are in-person currently in both Yuba and Sutter counties, we need approximately 1500 vaccines to give the first dose and then another 1500 vaccines a month later. We can administer them ourselves. We do not need anything other than the vaccines. I am asking that the county supervisors work with you and the county superintendents to secure vaccines for the educators who are in school, in-person!

Educationally yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicole K. Newman". The signature is written in black ink and includes a horizontal line at the end.

Nicole Newman, Superintendent