

San Diego educators and students demand access to COVID-19 outbreak data

San Diego Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
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As San Diego County furthers its relaxation of restrictions for reopening businesses and public institutions, COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to rise. As of Wednesday, county public health officials have reported 330 new COVID-19 cases and four deaths, increasing the region's total to 55,540 cases and 881 deaths.

With abysmal mitigation efforts to be continued or even worsened, the region can expect a massive increase in infections in the weeks to come. Earlier this month, San Diego County reported a record forty-seven distinct outbreaks over the span of a single week, October 7-13, with an outbreak representing three or more COVID-19 infections in a single location.

Officials refuse to inform the public where those or any of the county's 389 outbreaks since March have occurred. San Diego reports a daily count of outbreaks and cases, but the county is actively redacting the names of locations or businesses where outbreaks have occurred.

According to data aggregated by the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, outbreaks since March include over 100 businesses, 93 restaurants and bars, 23 healthcare, 20 grocery and retail stores, 14 food processing plants, 10 gyms, and 8 salons.

Officials falsely claim that releasing detailed safety information could potentially make individuals less inclined to properly report their recent activities to contact-tracing investigators. This excuse is used to conceal the real concerns of the financial elite across the state and beyond—the full reopening of businesses, the economy, and the flow of capital during the current crisis—despite all consequences.

We, the San Diego Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, demand that information on these latest forty-seven outbreaks and more in San Diego County

be released to the public. This data on the spread of COVID-19 is essential to the broader health and safety of the community, and therefore must be available and easily accessible.

The rising infection rates in San Diego County are the result of relaxed safety protocols by the county, and an intentionally ineffective tiered rules program regulated by the California state government.

In order to maintain its “red tier” status, which allows more businesses to remain open, San Diego County officials recently campaigned for Sacramento to ignore the massive outbreak of more than 1,257 cases at San Diego State University (SDSU). The state did not overtly oblige, but instead adjusted their monitoring rules so that the higher rates of testing at SDSU offset the increase in positive cases, thus preventing the county from sliding into the “purple tier” which would require them to close more businesses.

Due to the policy change, San Diego County—the second largest in the state and home to the second largest elementary school district—is now allowed less restrictive policies than a county like Los Angeles, despite its high rates of infection and new outbreaks.

In contrast to the county's concealing of the outbreaks at local businesses and bars, officials have managed to make every detail of the SDSU outbreak easily accessible. The SDSU data is easily available to the public via county and university websites. Since the outbreak began in September as students returned to unsafe dorms, the reporting on cases has been relatively transparent.

As part of the school's defensive strategy of blaming the behavior of students for community outbreaks and the suffering they've endured from becoming infected, officials have made certain that cases among non-resident students and on-campus students are easily

differentiated and that individuals are faulted for their behavior. The university's defensive strategy is clearly intended to absolve themselves of all responsibility for endangering students and the broader community with their reopening of the campus.

In a demonstration of the irrationality of capitalism, powerful contact-tracing tools are being utilized to blame students and their social connections for super-spreader events. The same investigations conducted at SDSU have taken place with dozens of outbreaks across San Diego County, but the most valuable data has been purposefully concealed in such a manner that its utility is almost totally forsaken.

The public must be granted access to proper data and information so that individuals can make informed decisions on their health, and to ensure the proper protection of themselves and their families. The concealment of COVID-19 information is not only contemptuous and self-serving, but also anti-democratic and actively endangers the community.

The San Diego Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, alongside the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at SDSU, demand the release of this information and reject the scapegoating of SDSU or other college students across the country and beyond. We call on all students, educators, and workers in the area to join the San Diego Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee and take up the fight to halt the deadly reopening of schools, stop the spread of the pandemic, and save lives.



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