

“They are placing human safety and survival above capitalist interests”

## Students speak out in support of Chicago teachers struggle against in-person learning

Our reporters  
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*The Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee is holding its next meeting at 7pm CST tonight, February 4, to discuss how to mobilize opposition to the deadly reopening of schools. Register now and share this link with your coworkers to build the committee!*

Over 25,000 teachers and other educators and staff in Chicago, Illinois, the third largest school district in the US, are engaged in a critical struggle to oppose the city’s effort to reopen public schools.

In this fight, educators have come into direct conflict with the Democratic Party, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), and the mainstream media, all of which are lobbying for school reopenings to begin as soon as possible. In order to push through this reckless policy, there has been a concerted effort to pit students and parents against the teachers.

In an editorial published on Tuesday, for example, the *Chicago Tribune* asserted that teachers were falsely claiming “to be a voice for ‘the children,’” while “actual science” is “making it harder for teachers unions to continue to justify staying home.”

In fact, the science shows that the reopening of schools poses an existential threat to the lives and safety of educators, their students and families and all of society. All those media pundits and political figures who are attempting to portray the teachers’ actions as harmful to students are engaged in a political smear campaign, in the service of the Democratic Party.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in the US, the youth and student wing of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), spoke to

students throughout the country on the Chicago teachers’ struggle and the effort to divide students and teachers and found widespread support.

Saadiq, a student at University of Maryland, called for students to support their teachers in the struggle against unsafe school reopenings. “The corporate press is playing a despicable role pitting students and parents against teachers, who are only motivated by their desire to stop the spread of COVID in their communities. ... The corporate press serves as a mouthpiece for the ruling class, who want teachers back in school so parents can return to work and continue to pump out profits.”

Adam, a college student in South Florida, said that he fully supports the Chicago teachers in their struggle. “The Chicago teachers strike is one of placing human safety and survival above capitalist interests. The disastrous response to the COVID-19 pandemic by our government has forced educators to demand something that shouldn’t even have to be discussed: support and safety during a global pandemic.”

He explained that he stands in solidarity with the teachers and hopes that “they can continue to be a guiding light to the working class’ fight against an inhumane policy.”

Keely, a New York student, spoke about the broader context in which the Chicago teachers struggle is unfolding. “This historical moment is the culmination of decades of union failures and Democrats’ worship of profit above all else, one where science is ignored. The mainstream media prints endless lies, and human life is disregarded in favor of the hoarding of wealth.”

Keely explained that workers needed to come together in independent organizations based on their class interests. “I think it is really important that people all over the world come together to recognize this breaking point, demand change and stand in solidarity with the teachers and students of the Chicago Public Schools.” Keely encouraged workers and students “to start or get involved in both local and national rank-and-file committees in order to advocate for safety, science and life for all during this crucial time.”

Many students spoke on the campaign to undermine, discredit or downplay the scientific evidence showing that reopening schools, both K-12 and colleges, is dangerous.

Sebastian, a student at University of California at Berkeley, said that the push to reopen in-person instruction of the Chicago schools “exposes the blatant indifference to human life expressed by the political establishment.”

He continued, “There is no doubt that returning to in-person instruction will lead to increased deaths among children, parents and instructors by COVID-19. This push by the government is no less than a continuation of the murderous ‘herd immunity’ policy started by the Trump administration.

“As a student,” Sebastian concluded, “I support the struggle by the Chicago teachers in protection of their lives and the lives of their students.”

Mike is a student at New Mexico State University and also a member of the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee. He stressed that the struggle of the Chicago teachers is one “against the entire ruling elite.”

“It doesn’t take long to understand the humongous political implications of the coming battle. ... For over a year now, the capitalists have relentlessly forced workers back into unsafe workplaces to produce private profit and boost stock portfolios. Each day brings ever greater death to the American public. However, the ruling class doesn’t care. They are completely callous to the plight of the workers. To the capitalists, workers are just cogs in a machine.”

Mike warned teachers, “The Chicago Teachers Union cannot be trusted. Chicago educators are expressing their will to fight. ... But the Chicago Teachers Union will not agree to a strike. The union doesn’t want to fight for workers. Rather, they will stop the workers cold in their tracks. Chicago teachers, beware, the CTU

is planning for a betrayal of their membership. The CTU is holding the teachers back.”

He concluded by appealing to other students and workers to support the Chicago teachers. “Chicago teachers know that the fight that they are taking up holds the outcome for the struggle of millions upon millions of the oppressed masses in the United States and around the world. I’m in support of the Chicago teachers, and I’m calling to extend this fight to New Mexico.”



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