

# As schools are forced open, Iowa removes all COVID-19 regulations

**Will Lowery****8 February 2021**

A new public health declaration went into effect on Superbowl Sunday in Iowa, lifting all statewide mask mandates and restrictions on gatherings, including at bars and restaurants. On Friday, Iowa Republican Governor Kim Reynolds gave a press conference that did not explain the reasoning behind easing the state's restrictions. The order comes exactly one week before Iowa's public K-12 schools will be forced to offer 100 percent in-person learning.

Since March there have been more than 324,000 confirmed cases and over 5,100 deaths from COVID-19 in the state. While daily infections and deaths have declined from their peak in mid-November 2020, a seven-day average of 743 Iowans are confirmed COVID-19 positive and 30 are dying every day.

Iowa's mask mandates and regulations were only ever partial. At their most stringent, as of December 2020, face coverings were required only when around people for 15 minutes and where social distancing was not possible, indoor gatherings were limited to no more than 15 people and outdoor gatherings were limited to 30.

Large cities like Des Moines and Iowa City have, so far, maintained their public gathering restrictions and mask mandates, but infections rates will climb as community spread increases due to the malicious negligence of the ruling class with the homicidal campaign to reopen schools and the economy.

Reynolds, a shameless Trump apologist, has recklessly pursued herd immunity in Iowa, resulting in one of the highest death rates in the country of 1,619 deaths per million in population. The state ranks 47th in vaccine distribution, with roughly 7 percent of Iowans having received the first of two vaccine injections.

Iowa will see thousands more needless deaths as a result of well-documented increases in community

spread via public school openings. The pandemic's impact is expected to be compounded by the UK COVID-19 variant B.1.1.7 strain which was discovered last week in Johnson and Bremer counties. The UK variant is much more contagious and may be more deadly; it is expected to be dominant variant in the US by March.

According to a new law passed by the state legislature last month, on February 15 Iowa K-12 schools must begin to hold in-person classes for all students who choose to attend classes in person. Although Iowa educators were slated to receive the vaccine starting February 1, Iowa's abysmal vaccine distribution and availability ensures that most educators will be forced into schools without any inoculation. Many school districts, in order to comply with the law, are offering students either 100 percent in-person learning or 100 percent online learning, removing hybrid learning options that allowed for some social distancing.

The ruling class in Iowa is using the pandemic as an opportunity to loot the public education system and transfer public funds to for-profit charter schools as well. Under the guise of addressing public schools that are "failing"—due, in part, to the immense strain of the pandemic—the state legislature also passed a bill creating "Student First Scholarships" that enable students in underperforming public schools that receive federal assistance to transfer to private and charter schools and bring public funding with them. In effect, this legislation establishes publicly-funded scholarships for private school tuition and expands Iowa's charter school program, while defunding schools in poor and working-class areas.

Educators and all workers across the United States should see Iowa's homicidal push to force teachers and students back into classrooms, with little to no

vaccinations and no public health regulations, as a warning. The push to open up schools is the beginning of the push to open up the entire economy and return parents back to similarly deadly workplace conditions. Though vaccines are now being distributed, the ruling class is seeking to maximize its profits and force the economy to reopen, no matter the death toll.

As Chicago teachers fight against the Chicago Public School system and the Chicago Teachers Union's deadly push for a "safe return" to schools, educators around the country must look to entire the working class, and organize rank-and-file safety committees to prepare for a general strike to shut down schools and non-essential businesses with full compensation for workers and small businesses to end the pandemic.



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