

“It’s like the CDC wants people to die”

US educators and autoworkers denounce changes to CDC mask guidelines

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The WSWs is fighting to educate workers and build opposition to the reckless lifting of mask mandates and the full reopening of all workplaces and schools. Send us comments exposing conditions at your workplace and why you oppose the lifting of safety measures to educators@wsws.org and we will publish them on the WSWs. Circulate these articles widely on social media to break through the lies, propaganda and censorship!

Last week, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) changed its health and safety guidelines to allow vaccinated individuals to stop wearing masks or practice social distancing indoors. On the same day, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten called for the full reopening of all US schools in the fall.

However, the pandemic is far from over and these moves are entirely premature. With only 37 percent of the US population vaccinated, the CDC’s loosening of its mask guidelines will undoubtedly lead to unnecessary infections and deaths. Daily new cases in the US alone remain at over 30,000 infections, itself a gross underestimation.

Across the globe, more dangerous variants of the coronavirus are rapidly spreading in countries such as India and Brazil, affecting people of all age groups. Significantly, doctors treating patients in India and Singapore have noted that the new B.1.617 and B.1.617.2 variants have caused cases among children to be more frequent and more severe.

In the face of these alarming developments, the *World Socialist Web Site* continues to call for the immediate closure of all schools and nonessential workplaces and the continued use of masks outside people’s homes, while the population is safely vaccinated. It is imperative that the working class follow the latest scientific developments regarding the pandemic in order to combat the deadly pseudoscience that the ruling class is peddling to force open the economy.

The anti-scientific and politically motivated move by the

CDC has received significant opposition from leading epidemiologists and within the working class. The WSWs spoke with educators and autoworkers on these developments and the role of the unions in pushing for a full reopening of schools and workplaces.

A supporter of the rank-and-file committee at the **Faurecia Gladstone plant in Columbus, Indiana** said, “It is too soon to remove the mask requirement. If you go by the actual statistics, there are still too many people getting COVID-19. They have a lot of ads out that are giving kudos to people who are getting the shot, but overall they are misdirecting the public.

“With the CDC lifting restrictions, that’s giving people a false sense of security that the pandemic is under control when in reality it’s not. This is motivated by the capitalists. I am just so angry about it because none of them are putting their lives on the line every day the way we are. I saw the assistant plant manager today for the first time in a week. He was out for a couple of weeks with COVID-19, but he never told anybody.

“They have been concealing infections from day one. They are still covering them up. And the union is in with them. We found out today that the South Plant in Columbus and the Fort Wayne plant were both getting hazard pay during the pandemic, but the Gladstone plant did not. You would have thought that the union would be right on top of that, but all they say when you ask them about it is ‘we’ll have to check into that.’ It’s a cover-up.”

The Faurecia worker concluded, “It’s not only a matter of the spread of the virus. We are fighting a murderous regime of working people to death.”

Michael Hull, a former history teacher in Texas and founder of the Facebook group “Teachers Against Dying,” commented, “The CDC admits they do not know how effective the vaccines are against new variants and even point to data that shows they may be less effective against certain [variants]. How well the vaccines protect people with

weakened immune systems, including people who take immunosuppressive medications, is also largely unknown. These individuals will now be more likely to get exposed. What's more, we don't even know how long these vaccines protect people!

"I remember when CDC director Robert Redfield held up a face mask and said they may be more effective than a vaccine in preventing individual coronavirus infections! So, why not use them in tandem with the vaccine to depress community transmission and prevent mutations? The inconsistent and ever-changing 'guidance' from the CDC indicates that we simply don't know enough about coronavirus or the vaccine to play so fast and loose.

"Even though much of the population and most children remain unvaccinated, oligarchic union bosses like Randi Weingarten are more than willing to collude with corporatist Democrats to send millions of kids, teachers, and school staff into a deadly situation like the expendable peasants they see us as. If the illusion of normalcy returns, businesses and schools can crowd together again and profits can be maximized. The ruling class has no problem throwing caution to the wind. The working class needs to take notice of the betrayals of our union and political leadership and organize a strong opposition against them."

An **autoworker from Ford's Kansas City Assembly Plant** denounced the CDC's lifting of its masking guidance. The plant has stopped production through the end of May due to the semiconductor chip shortage, but corporate management along with the United Auto Workers forced the nearly 10,000 workers in the plant to continue working in close contact during the pandemic, leading to a wave of infections and several deaths which the union and company have worked to conceal.

"Here we are in a pandemic, and some people still don't believe it. This should be waking people up. The CDC acts like they want people to die. I heard the restaurants and casinos were packed around Kansas City after the CDC said vaccinated people don't need to wear masks. Now, you can't tell me that many people are actually vaccinated. But what that does is it exposes all the workers at the restaurants and casinos, who are poor, and they can't even get time off if they get sick. They just want people to spend money, spend money."

An **auto parts worker from Indiana** also raised skepticism about the CDC's announcement and urged other workers to continue to be cautious, while sympathizing with the impact on the most vulnerable workers. They echoed the Kansas City worker's sentiments which are shared by millions of workers, saying, "It's like the CDC wants people to die."

Stating emphatically, "I'm still wearing a mask," they

added, "People still get it if they have the vaccine or not. I don't know why they would do this. People are really exploited by the food service industry. They are getting some of the highest exposure to the virus, next to health care workers, and they don't have good insurance or paid time off. At those jobs, if you don't show up, you don't get paid."

Ric, a fifth grade teacher in Los Angeles Unified School District, said, "The American Federation of Teachers' fat cat union boss is a poster child for what teachers unions have become. Randi Weingarten spent a few years in the classroom back in the day of blackboards and chalk, and then decades in the unions. She banks \$500,000 a year, is a millionaire, and is a member of the Democratic National Committee. Her primary job is shutting down even the thought of a strike for better conditions and to prevent teachers from uniting nationwide. Teachers are in sore need of new leadership.

"Weingarten isn't a progressive and doesn't have any socialist leanings, and neither do any of the major teachers' unions. They talk a good talk but predictably fall in line once the Democratic Party of Wall Street and War gives them their marching orders. In my experience with the teachers' unions, I noticed that the more progressive a motion was the more likely it was to fail. For example, they all backed Hillary Clinton over the more 'progressive' Bernie Sanders, who is still an imperialist in sheep's clothing. Clinton is also an advocate of the very charter schools the unions pretend to oppose."

He concluded, "Now, the union bosses are insisting the schools must reopen and that it's safe to do so. Just today, we were told our 5th grade culmination ceremony was postponed due to COVID infections of students in surrounding schools. This exposes Weingarten's lie that all schools must reopen because it's safe to do so."



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