SEP California gubernatorial candidate David Moore addresses Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee meeting on fight against school reopenings

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With coronavirus cases skyrocketing, fueled by school reopenings, the West Coast Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee held a meeting Saturday to discuss the way forward for parents, teachers and students to address the escalating threat to their health and their very lives.

As opposed to the Republicans, the Democrats and their political appendages in the trade unions and the pseudo-left organizations, the educators rank-and-file safety committees and the Socialist Equality Party are calling for comprehensive public health measures to contain and eradicate the coronavirus. These include, in addition to a massive campaign of vaccination and masking, universal testing and contact tracing and the lockdown of all schools and nonessential industries. Without such measures, which are backed by leading epidemiologists and health experts, the world faces ever rising cases and deaths, with the near certainty of the emergence of new, more virulent strains of the virus.

Dr. Benjamin Mateus, a practicing oncologist and writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*, spoke at the meeting. He highlighted new research on the Delta variant and discussed the criminal decision to let the virus spread within the population.

The Delta variant of the coronavirus, Mateus noted, has a viral load in infected individuals up to 300 times greater than that of the initial "wild" variant. The more infectious Delta variant, he explained, decisively exposes claims that "children don't get the coronavirus" for the lies that they are.

A number of different studies were cited by Dr. Mateus, including a recent one on COVID spread on campuses by the COVSIM research group at North Carolina State and the University of North Carolina. The study found that within 90 days of school reopening, without masks or testing, around 75 percent of K-12 school children will become infected with the coronavirus, even accounting for children over the age of 12 who have already been vaccinated. For unvaccinated children, the number rises to 90 percent.

Even with universal masking and testing, around 18 percent of children will get infected during the first 90 days, according to the study. This means that some 10.2 million of the nation's 56.6 million school children would become infected by December, under the most optimistic mitigation scenario, on top of the 4.6 million who have already tested positive.

Dr. Mateus also highlighted research showing that currently available vaccines have less efficacy in combating the coronavirus than what is widely believed. Not only does the effectiveness of the vaccines wane over time, but further mutations of the Delta variant are highly likely to hijack the antibody response created by the vaccines to further reproduce.

David Moore, a special education public school teacher in Oakland and the Socialist Equality Party's candidate in the September 14 California gubernatorial recall election, also spoke at the meeting.

Moore said that the coronavirus crisis both on the West Coast and internationally was the product not simply of the biological character of the virus itself but more importantly of the inability and unwillingness of capitalist governments to put in place any measures to adequately address it. "This is a conscious decision to not only allow but indeed to push for the mass infection of children," he said.

He noted the June 15 decision of California Governor

Gavin Newsom to scrap all of the limited mitigation measures statewide, including stay-at-home orders and bans on indoor dining and other public gatherings. Within only two months of this decision, hospitalizations due to COVID-19 had increased by over 700 percent, with the state now averaging over 13,000 new cases daily.

Nevertheless, the criticisms leveled against the governor by his leading Democratic and Republican opponents in the September 14 recall election were all from the right, Moore explained, opposing even the most limited mitigation measures put in place by the governor.

The leading Democratic contender, the multi-millionaire real estate investor Kevin Paffrath, argued that the coronavirus pandemic could be contained via "local" rather than statewide or national measures. The leading Republican candidate, ultra-right radio host Larry Elder, opposed any and all mandated health measures, including vaccination.

As Moore explained, only the Socialist Equality Party was running on a program that prioritizes the lives of workers over the profit interests of billionaires.

Several in attendance made powerful contributions after Moore and Mateus had spoken. They expressed the growing hostility within the working class to the criminal sacrifice of their lives and those of their children to the profit interests of the financial elite.

Elizabeth, a registered nurse working in the Los Angeles area, spoke on the disaster unfolding in area hospitals and the inability of the profit-motivated health care system to adequately address it.

She noted that even before the coronavirus struck, hospitals were kept woefully understaffed to maximize profits, with those same staffing ratios leading to nurses coming into contact with many COVID-positive patients every day. This has led, Elizabeth said, to thousands of qualified nurses leaving the field and many of them falling gravely ill or dying themselves.

In terms of who was to blame for this state of affairs, she was sharply critical of the trade unions, particularly the teachers and nurses unions. "I find it appalling," she said, "that schools are reopening without any opposition from either the teachers unions or nurses unions."

Alfonso, a middle school teacher in the San Diego area, spoke about the dangerous conditions in schools after only a couple of weeks of the new academic year. "I keep getting emails," he said. "Somebody tested positive, then somebody else tested positive, then somebody else." He continued, "On top of that, you have to be counselors to these kids, who are more worried about infecting their parents and grandparents than they are about getting it themselves. These are the kinds of tragic and sad conversations we have."

These sentiments were shared by Steve, a teacher in the San Francisco Bay area. "In my classroom, they just give us an 8"x 12" cube, and that's our only air circulation," he said. On the political lessons of the pandemic, Steve said, "We have to organize outside of the unions. That is the challenge we have to meet."

Kandi, a parent of two disabled children in Chula Vista outside of San Diego, shared the immense fears she has as her children return to in-person learning. "This coming year," she said, "I'm concerned not only for my children, but for all children.

"My daughter has 22 violations, and there are 15 violations in my son's case for non-attendance. I needed to get five doctor's notes just to get my children to have virtual learning. While I agree that it would be great if children could see their friends again, their safety will always come first.

"I agree that we need to have a working-class strategy to fight this. We need to have a strike on rent, we need to cancel rent and close down schools and workplaces where the virus can spread. In fact, we've never really been closed since the beginning of the pandemic."

Lisa, a special educator in Oregon, also spoke. "I feel like I'm in a minority in terms of safety," she said. "The kids in classrooms are extremely vulnerable though, and we just keep going backwards. I agree that we should have rank-and-file committees, and I'd like to hear more about how to start one."

The meeting concluded with a near-unanimous vote to support the campaign of David Moore for California governor.

We encourage all readers to contact the *World Socialist Web Site* to either join or start a rank-and-file committee of workers in your area and to support the campaign of David Moore for California governor.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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