Educators and workers in United States support call by UK parents for school strike

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Educators, workers and students in the United States are expressing their support for the October 1 school strike called by parents in the United Kingdom to protect children against the spread of COVID-19. UK parent Lisa Diaz has called on parents to keep their children home to oppose Prime Minister Boris Johnson's "herd immunity" policy of deliberately infecting children. All over the world, capitalist governments are keeping schools open even as the number of childhood infections, hospitalizations and deaths grow.

In the US, nearly a quarter of a million children have been infected each week since schools opened in mid-August, with three children dying on average each day. The *World Socialist Web Site* has received statements of support and videos from around the United States.

California

A middle-school librarian in San Diego said, "Every nation's greatest natural resource is its children. They deserve the absolute greatest care, help and protection that can be provided! We owe it to every child that they be sheltered and defended from one the most terrible epidemics of our time. Due to the fact other nations have been successful in quarantining their populations, to do anything less is unreasonable, uncivilized, and unconscionable."

A teacher in the Sweetwater Union High School District in the San Diego area also expressed solidarity with the UK parents' strike, saying, "I support you!" As a member of the West Coast Rank-and-File Safety Committees, she endorsed the committee's recent statement of support for the school strike. "I would add that the stress in the classroom is tremendously high; teachers feel like they're policing kids' masking, rather than teaching. I have also witnessed even my most diligent colleagues just giving up on mask reminders; I've seen most classrooms with at least one to five students with nose and mouth showing, even more with noses out."

"The ruling class is opening schools for their own profit, despite a raging pandemic that is infecting and hospitalizing children at increasing rates," Max, a college student living in San Diego, said. "The working class must unite and protect the most vital asset in our society, which is children. This is why a school strike led by the working class is absolutely essential right now."

"It is an imperative that the drive to open schools be opposed," David, a recent graduate from San Diego State University, said. "I fully support the parents and students in the UK. Solidarity with Parent's School Strike!"

Elizabeth, a Los Angeles nurse, submitted a video statement of support for the UK school strike.

Washington state

Michael, a teacher in Washington state, said, "Every day when we work with students we remember two goals: students must be learning and students must be safe. We can never compromise on either. Lisa, the parent in the UK, is absolutely correct. Students are not safe in this environment and the only way to protect them is through this action. I completely support this and join her in the demand for the immediate reintroduction of high-quality remote instruction for all students."

Tennessee

DJK Freeman, a teacher in Tennessee, wrote, "I support the October 1 parent strike in the UK against the homicidal herd immunity strategy which has already sickened half the school-aged children in the United Kingdom with the highly infectious Delta variant of COVID. I also encourage parents throughout the world to join this strike to put a halt to this cruel experiment currently being perpetrated on children all over the world. In Tennessee, where I am a teacher, the barbaric policies of Governor Lee and the Republican legislature have banned mask mandates, school closures, and virtual options. This has allowed COVID cases to surge and exceed last winter's peak.

"Cases of school-aged children in the last 14 days alone reached over 18,000. Teachers described the debacle in classrooms as students returned to school only to contract COVID and be out of school again. One teacher told me she only had a third of her students present at any one time since August, and it was rarely the

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same students. Compound student absences with educators who were absent because they became infected with COVID in the last six weeks, and any benefit of in-person instruction touted by the ruling class has been negated by the interruption of instruction caused by the rotation of substitutes through classrooms as schools struggled to keep schools open.

"Parents must lead the movement to protect our children and educators. They must call for a complete shutdown of in-person instruction to eradicate COVID. It is up to parents to stand up to our dissolute leaders such as Governor Lee, Joe Biden, and Boris Johnson and demand the closure of schools and non-essential businesses in order to end this pandemic once and for all."

Texas

Michael, a former teacher in Texas and member of the Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, submitted the following video statement of support for the UK school strike:

New York

A middle-school teacher in Brooklyn said, "As a New York City school teacher I am in total support of Lisa Diaz in her call for parents to strike. Parents have a right to protect their children. I have seen for myself the true conditions in our schools and the lack of any true mitigations to save the children and teachers from being exposed to COVID-19 and its variants. The 'powers-that-be' are clearly opting for the 'herd immunity' approach to end the pandemic, which means children are no more than sacrificial lambs to them. I stand in total solidarity with the parents who are bravely taking action to protect their children."

A teacher from Brooklyn added, "I saw Lisa Diaz's videos. She's amazing. I agree that the October 1 Parent Strike is a really important movement to shut down schools, and it could really get the ball rolling on what we've been fighting for here in NYC.

"If a deadly pandemic and being extremely short-staffed isn't something that would cause the government to close the schools, then what would? This whole thing is endangering children!"

"I support the school strike in the UK, as parents, children and teachers over there are not being allowed to take the most basic and rational steps to avoid infection," Ben Katchor, a cartoonist, said.

"The strike is in accord with the recommendations of many epidemiologists and researchers who've had experience in eradicating dangerous epidemics. Education and play can go on without gathering in crowded classrooms. The wasteful spending of the government should be redirected to support parents so that they can stay at home, feed, entertain and educate their children."

Mississippi

Parker, a student and a worker from Mississippi, said, "Lisa Diaz's call for a school strike on October 1 highlights the true and real danger presented to children in schools not only in the UK but the rest of the world also. Since January of last year, over 4.76 million people have died as a result of COVID-19 and roughly 466,000 people test positive for the virus every day.

"Here in my native Mississippi, there are warnings from the pediatricians as more and more children get COVID with increasingly detrimental effects. While people die by the hundreds and fall ill daily, the politicians in this state refuse to enforce vaccine mandates or even statewide mask mandates, and schools are open and operating at 100% capacity. They've cut off most of the unemployment benefits that were there this time last year and driven hard to get everyone back to work to sustain corporate profits.

"To know that all of this is entirely preventable makes me bubble up much like it does Lisa. Yet actions like those of Lisa Diaz can imbue so much hope into movements like ours.

"The working class is fed up with being force-fed the story that this is the new normal or that we will just have to live with COVID. There is no living with death all around you. I don't have children of my own, but I stand in solidarity with her and working-class parents across the world. There is no need to offer up the future of our society as sacrificial lambs on the altar of capital.

"Again, the call should go out for the formation of rank-and-file committees in workplaces and universities everywhere, independent of the unions and political machines with the goal of the mass mobilization of the working class and its collective conscious. This is just one part of the protracted struggle, and through ending the pandemic and saving lives, the conditions necessary for revolution will present themselves," Parker concluded.

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