

“We have got to get organized and stand up for ourselves”

Support for October 1 school strike from workers in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio and New York

Our reporters
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This is the second of a two-part series on messages supporting the parents strike sent to the WSWs from workers, educators, parents and teachers in the US. The first part is viewable [here](#).

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.

Pennsylvania

A Pittsburgh bus driver commented, “We should all stay out. They are forcing us to take a situation where people are going to die. The politicians don’t care about the kids. Schools have been declining for years. They just want the parents at work, all you hear is that there are not enough workers. The problem is that they don’t want to pay us. You can’t live on minimum wage, and you can’t live on part-time. I support the parents’ strike, we have got to stand up for ourselves.”

A Pittsburgh parent of a fourth grader spoke in support of the strike, saying, “I am terrified every day. The kids line up; they check their masks; they take their temperatures, but there are 20 or more children in his room. Everybody is not going to keep their mask on all day every day. That is just not realistic.

“They say that kids are safe in school, but what kind of fools do they think we are? They have to get shots before they can come to school because all kinds of things will spread in school, but somehow COVID won’t. Don’t be ridiculous. I’m glad to see what they are doing in Britain. We should be doing this here as well. We have got to get organized and stand up for ourselves.”

An auto parts worker from Dana Inc., where working conditions are akin to those of the early 19th century and where COVID-19 is rampant, voiced support for the October 1 school strike. He stated,

“It’s bogus that the parents are getting attacked by the media and school administrations for keeping their children home. COVID-19 is not at a lower level, it is bad right now like it has always been. Parents are well within their rights to keep their kids at home. It’s wrong that Lisa would get any negative repercussions about keeping her kids at home. I’ve had talks with my wife about this. We both agree that if our kid gets sent home to quarantine, then that’s the last time she’s going back to school for the semester.”

A Philadelphia high school social studies teacher stated, “I think it is great what Lisa is doing. I’ve already tweeted about the event. Parents need to be aware of the consequences. The science now shows that a small but substantial minority of their children are going to get Long COVID or worse.

“An advanced society shouldn’t tolerate a product that gives children brain damage or organ failure. An advanced society shouldn’t tolerate their children getting lead poisoning, but the powers that be are saying that we should tolerate this. Lisa is showing that parents have another direction, that they don’t have to accept this, that by mobilizing parents, factory workers and educators we can fight this.”

Referring to the announcement by American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten that the union was holding a town hall with the far-right Open Schools USA, the teacher commented, “On Twitter I blasted the union president for holding this, and I see that she has already gotten a lot of negative comments that she had to try and explain this. She said that she wants to talk with all sides in the debate. One of the speakers on the panel said that we had to accept that some teachers are going to die. Why do we have to accept this? Would you hold a panel discussion with a Nazi?

“The situation at our school is terrible. We are all stressed out, and it is only the beginning of the year. We are so short-staffed; teachers are leaving almost every day. We are supposed to get one prep period a day, but we are always being called to cover for someone who didn’t come in.

“I have a teacher aide; he has been off for three days. There is no information, they are not telling us if he has COVID. He is in my

class one hour a day. He goes to seven or eight other classes. There is so much intermingling going on that there is going to be a major outbreak in the school.

“They are not testing the students. No one knows what is facing the student, what they might be bringing home to their parents, families. The policies of the ruling classes are homicidal. Lisa and the rank-and-file committees are showing that we have to stand up for ourselves and fight this system.”

Michigan

Joe, a municipal worker in Michigan, told the WWSWS, “I support the school strike! I have a four-year-old daughter, and we’ve chosen not to put her in preschool last year and this year because we don’t trust the mitigation strategies in place. I am horrified by the stories told by Lisa Diaz and other parents about being forced to send their children into school environments that don’t have any mitigation strategies in place. Coordinated action is needed to halt the pandemic and protect the children!”

Ed, a teacher in Detroit, stated, “I’m in complete support of Lisa Diaz’s parent strike on October 1. I believe this pandemic is being ignored by the Democratic and Republican parties as the deaths pile up. Our school is one of the better schools from the standpoint of mitigation strategies. However, I still don’t believe that these schools are safe, and mitigation is not enough. I’m triple vaccinated, and yet I have comorbidities and certain ailments that involve the immune system, so I am very cautious. And in fact, I’m concerned about my continuing to teach face-to-face.”

He added, “I believe that parents, teachers, students and the entire working class have to come together to put an end to this virus and oppose the policies coming out of the Democratic and Republican parties.”

A Detroit teacher, Jeff, said, “I agree with the #SchoolStrike2021! I’m angry. It’s not safe. I was vaccinated and had both doses back in the spring. Plus, I had COVID prior to being vaccinated, and they told me I’d have strong antibodies for about six to nine months. I still caught it after only eight full days of teaching. I was so sleepy and tired all last week, and I guess that explains why. Other than that, no symptoms. Exhaustion was my first sign. I just thought I was worn out from getting back to work.

“The headache never lets up. It’s nagging and nasty, and I have a scratchy, minor sore throat. I lost my sense of smell the first time I had COVID, but so far not this time. There is no way we can last in school all year. It only took eight days for one of us to get sick! That’s ridiculous.

“I don’t want to go back in the building, not ever until this is under control. If I caught it twice and have been vaccinated, we could catch it several times over the year, and perhaps not be so lucky one of those times. I agree with Lisa. It’s so not safe. Staying home and having some strict measures in place is the only way to do it. I know New Zealand and a couple other places are doing very well—but it was a FULL closure.”

Ohio

An educator and parent from Ohio told the WWSWS, “I support it. It is time that parents want to take matters into their own hands because they’re the only ones who could do it. Our children’s health is in jeopardy because this thing spreads like crazy.

“Everywhere in the world, it’s important that people can do

something. Parents care about their children more than anyone, and if we leave it to the administration, they are not going to do it. The government’s not going to do it, and certainly companies are not going to give the parents the time to stay home while the kids stay home from school. So it’s time that they do things for themselves.”

He added, “Eradication is the only policy that will work with COVID-19 and any of its variants. That requires the closing of schools. Not just masks, not just social distancing but the closing of schools and nonessential workplaces.

“I completely support this walkout on Friday, and I will spread the word because I know that it’s maybe the only way that it’s going to get people’s attention. We can do the right thing. So far we haven’t been, or this virus would have been stopped a long time ago. I completely support Lisa Diaz. I completely support this movement to walk out of schools and I definitely want to be a part of that. I’m keeping my kid home from school on October 1.”

New York

A 6th grade teacher in southern New York stated, “Families everywhere need to stand in solidarity to oppose the unnecessary reopening of school buildings, which are resulting in so many contracting COVID, getting sick, dying and facing unknown long-term effects. There is no need for another human to become infected with COVID due to the herd immunity experiment going on in schools across the world right now. Schools can still educate safely. Please keep your children home on October 1st to oppose the government’s herd immunity experiment. Show them, we know better and deserve better!

“Schools are putting on a performance that is beyond deceiving. Parents are led to believe that schools are doing everything to ensure their child is safe. This has never been the case, and now more than ever they appear to be purposely avoiding safety measures and turning their heads as COVID cases are increasing in school-aged children and school staff. In my district, like so many, there are no health checks. Kids are not being tested or sent home even if they have COVID symptoms. Plus when there is a positive case in a class, no one other than the positive student is asked to quarantine.

“Parents are not even informed of any positives in their child’s room. I work with 11 year olds so they don’t even have the option of any vaccine protection. COVID-19 can be eradicated. Please stand up for the safety of everyone being forced to cram into classrooms with no alternative daily. There is no need for another child or school faculty member to become infected with COVID. We need to choose safety over trying to pretend that everything is back to normal.”



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