

Maryland, Ohio and Pennsylvania educators support October 15 school strike and the fight to eradicate COVID-19!

Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
14 October 2021

The Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee supports and stands in solidarity with the growing strike wave in the United States and around the world. We support the parents striking this Friday, October 15, against the deadly return to in-person learning and encourage the greatest attendance in the *World Socialist Web Site* online forum, “How to end the pandemic: The case for eradication,” which will be held Sunday, October 24.

Throughout the world, governments and the corporate media are perpetuating and promoting the lie that the pandemic is over. Everywhere they have removed almost all measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, including the reopening of schools to in-person learning and all nonessential services.

These policies have had a devastating effect. During the first week of October, the number of new cases worldwide grew by more than 2.8 million and nearly 48,000 human beings were added to the global death toll. In the US, at least another 620,000 people were infected, and another 10,000 people died from COVID-19. Our committee, comprising educators from Pennsylvania, Ohio and Maryland, has witnessed firsthand the following catastrophes:

- In Pennsylvania, new cases are climbing by over 5,000 per day, a rate not seen since this past winter. This week, we surpassed the grim figure of more than 30,000 deaths from COVID-19, a number that continues to grow each day.
- In Ohio, new cases are climbing by over 5,000 per day, a level not seen since January. At least 23,000 people have died from the virus in our state.
- In Maryland, new cases are climbing by over 1,000 a day, and more than 10,000 people have died so far.

On October 3, James Summers, a Baltimore father of 10, died from COVID-19. Two days before his death he called on social media for his son’s school to be shut down, writing, “My son is a 7th grade student who caught COVID in the class for the lack of testing. He came home sick and affected my other 9 kids. Now I am in the ICU unable to breathe for 3 weeks on my own and I am pissed. The school should be shut down.”

At least 14 other students tested positive, and one student is in the ICU from Summers’s son’s school, yet authorities refused to shut the school and take the necessary steps to protect families.

How many times have educators been told, “Students don’t get COVID in schools,” “children don’t get sick from COVID,” or “it’s no worse than the flu”? Yet this tragedy has been repeated throughout the country, with at least 140,000 children suffering the loss of a parent or primary caregiver from COVID-19.

Daily new COVID-19 cases in Pennsylvania are now as high as they were on April 17, despite the fact that nearly 60 percent of the population are fully vaccinated compared to only 25 percent on April 17. How is this possible?

Two major factors have fueled the surge of COVID-19 since the July low. First, the more-infectious Delta variant began to circulate throughout the state. Second, and even more fundamental, virtually all public health measures were lifted, including the full reopening of schools and nonessential businesses.

There is growing opposition to these pandemic policies and the politicians’ complete disregard for the health and lives of the working class. On October 1, thousands of parents, students and educators from throughout the world followed and participated in a

global online picket line.

Based on the work of leading scientists and epidemiologists, participants demanded that the steps necessary for the elimination and eradication of COVID-19 be implemented globally, including the shutdown of schools and nonessential production, combined with mass vaccination, universal testing and contact tracing, and the provision of full income to all workers and small-business people affected by temporary lockdowns.

This action was initiated by British parent Lisa Diaz and promoted by the network of Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committees throughout the world, articulating the strivings of the working class for a policy to fight the pandemic based on saving lives, not profits. The international appeal of this event shows that the working class in every country shares common interests and are all fighting a common enemy.

The October 1 school strike could only be organized independently of the official unions, which in no way represent the interests of the workers. In the US, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Educational Association pushed for the reopening of schools despite its deadly consequences.

AFT President Randi Weingarten, whose annual salary surpasses \$500,000, fully backs the Biden administration's school reopening policies and has committed the union's resources to this end. She falsely claims that the eradication of COVID-19 would be too costly and that with limited mitigation measures the virus can be brought under control.

However, teachers know that even the meager mitigation measures of the previous school year have been almost entirely dropped. Students are being crammed into aging classrooms with 20, 30 or more per class. Windows do not open, and proper ventilation is almost non-existent. Hallways, bathrooms and cafeterias have become no-mask zones.

Shortages of teachers, staff and bus drivers only increase the already overcrowded conditions. Testing and contact tracing largely do not take place as administrators argue the absurd statement that "if a child is masked then they didn't come in contact with anyone."

The October 1 action, which began in the UK, attracted the support of workers throughout the world, as statements, photos, and videos poured in from scores

of countries. The holding of a second online picket line this Friday, October 15, will again bring parents, educators and students together from throughout the world and is part of a growing movement of the working class.

At midnight on Wednesday, more than 10,000 workers launched a powerful strike against agricultural equipment manufacturer John Deere at plants throughout the Midwest. The rebellion of Deere workers is a major escalation of the strike movement that is sweeping across the United States, which includes 500 distillery workers in Kentucky who went on strike on September 11; 2,000 hospital workers in Buffalo, New York, who have been on strike since October 1; 1,400 Kellogg's cereal workers in Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Tennessee who walked out on October 5; 2,000 Frontier telecom workers in California who struck on October 6; and more than 1,000 Warrior Met coal miners in Northern Alabama who have been on strike since April.

This is part of an international movement of the working class. In South Africa, 150,000 steelworkers are on strike. In Sri Lanka, 92,000 nurses and health care workers are on strike. In Germany, strikes have spread through auto, metal and other basic industries.

The October 24 forum hosted by the WSWS will bring together leading scientists and epidemiologists who will explain why only a policy of global eradication, which brings together vaccines with a full public health campaign, can stop the pandemic. Only an immediate global eradication policy everywhere allows elimination anywhere.

Our committee is fighting for a policy for eradicating the COVID-19 globally. Nothing short of ending this pandemic is acceptable. We cannot live with our kids, community and colleagues dying. To find out more and join our committee, contact us today .



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