

Pennsylvania Educators support call for a Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
5 December 2021**

Educators from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland and Virginia met Thursday evening and unanimously adopted the below resolution in support of the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic initiated by the WSWs.

The Inquest will take the testimony of committed scientists and workers with first-hand experiences. It will work to reveal the truth behind the pandemic and expose the lies, cover-up, falsifications and misinformation that has been used to justify policies that have already led to the death of millions throughout the world.

Special note will be taken of the role of the official union leadership, including the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which has pushed the policies of reopening schools that have fueled surges throughout the pandemic.

In supporting the call for the Inquest, a Philadelphia teacher explained that the pandemic is nothing short of social murder, stating, "It would be wrong to think that they don't understand the consequences of what they are doing, that they are just misled or naive. This is social murder. They are fully aware that people are dying because of their actions. What drives them is the interests of the very rich, of the top 1 percent."

Explaining the importance and power of the truth, he continued, "We cannot leave any weapon in the shed. We must do everything we can to get the truth out there and mobilize the people."

A retired worker from Ohio explained that the WSWs has every right to hold this Inquest, noting, "They (WSWS) have published over 4,000 articles since the beginning of the pandemic warning of the dangers and showing the way forward. The rest of the media has covered up the crimes of the government and must be held accountable."

A teacher from a rural area of Virginia explained that people have been miseducated about the pandemic, commenting, "We have parents showing up at the school board demanding that students shouldn't have to wear masks. It is so frustrating that people are being lied to, and they believe these lies."

"I've been reading the WSWs for a couple of years, and it has been absolutely right about the danger posed by the pandemic and what needs to be done."

An educator from Ohio explained, "Things in my district are about the same as everywhere else. We are seeing a surge in cases, and it is only going to get worse as the winter comes."

Made up of educators from Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia, the Pennsylvania Educators Rank and File Safety Committee meets every Thursday evening. For details, email paedrankandfile@gmail.com, text (412) 336-8245 or visit this page.

The Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee supports and stands in solidarity with the call by the WSWs for the formation of a

Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In announcing the initiative, the WSWs wrote:

The pandemic is an event of historic magnitude. Its impact on the course of the twenty-first century may well prove to be as far-reaching as that of the two world wars on the twentieth century. Therefore, the origins, causes and consequences of the pandemic must be thoroughly investigated and understood. This disaster was neither an "act of God" nor the result of a malevolent conspiracy in a Chinese laboratory. The time has come to decisively refute the lies in which the pandemic narrative has been enshrouded by governments and the corporate media.

The emergence of the Omicron variant as the Delta variant continues to sweep the globe poses grave dangers for the world's population. It appears to be even more infectious than the Delta variant and potentially far more vaccine-resistant. This again emphasizes that the fight to end the pandemic will require a global coordination of resources that can only be accomplished by the working class guided by the best science.

For the previous two years, the governments of the world, along with the corporate-controlled media, have downplayed the pandemic, promoted the notion that "herd immunity" can be achieved through mass infection, and spread the lies that COVID-19 is just like the flu and that children do not get sick. Public health measures necessary to stop the spread of the pandemic were never implemented, and the limited measures taken were quickly dropped.

Globally we are now in the sixth wave of the pandemic. Officially over 5.22 million people have been killed and 265 million infected, with another 700,000 infected every day. The real figures are tragically significantly higher.

In the US, over 775,000 people have been killed by COVID-19, and 48 million people have been infected. In Pennsylvania, Ohio and Maryland, rates are as high as they were a year ago despite over 60 percent of the population being fully vaccinated.

Hospitalizations are up 30 percent in the past two weeks. In Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, which includes the city of Pittsburgh, 99 percent of ICU beds are full. This is before the onset of the winter months and before the Omicron variant has spread widely in the US.

The growth and spread of the pandemic is not merely a natural tragedy; it is the direct result of the prioritization of profits over human lives.

Reopening the economy required the reopening of public education, so that parents could be forced back to work. Each wave of the pandemic directly correlates to the reopening of businesses and schools.

Throughout the pandemic, the unions that are supposedly there to represent educators—the American Federation of Teachers and the National Educational Association—have worked with the corporate and political elite to push the reopening of in-person learning against the interests of educators, students, their families and the community at large.

In Pennsylvania, the AFT and NEA worked with the Wolf administration to reopen the schools and restrict the most basic rights of educators. Last month, the AFT ended the powerful strike by 800 teachers in Scranton, Pennsylvania, to force them back to work without any protections from COVID-19.

Now the Biden administration and the media are spreading another set of lies by claiming that we can vaccinate our way out of the pandemic, that only unvaccinated people are getting seriously sick and that only unvaccinated people are spreading the disease.

Vaccines are a powerful tool to fight the pandemic. The Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee demands the release of all pharmaceutical patents and the providing of resources so that the world's population can be quickly vaccinated. However, we realize that vaccines alone will not halt the spread of COVID-19.

Scientists and public health experts have emphasized that along with vaccinations a full public health campaign must be waged to eliminate the transmission of COVID-19, with the aim of its complete eradication. This is a global endeavor which cannot be isolated to a single country.

The government, politicians and corporate-controlled media cannot be trusted to tell the people the truth, let alone expose the criminal role that they themselves have played in allowing this pandemic to rage on.

The work of the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic will be to expose these sets of lies and reveal the real truth behind the pandemic. It will look at the cover-up, falsifications and misinformation that have been used to justify policies that have already led to the deaths of millions, which unless stopped will lead to the deaths of millions more. The Inquest will rely upon the testimony of committed scientists in the field and that of workers with first-hand experience. It will be conducted in the open and make public all its reports and findings.

Since our founding last year, the Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee has developed our basic demands to fight the pandemic:

- **The immediate closure of all in-person learning in public, private and charter schools.** It is impossible to “safely” open schools during a raging pandemic. The loss of life and the permanent physical and emotional damage to students who spread the disease to teachers, staff, parents and grandparents dwarfs any difficulties caused by online learning.

- **Full funding for public education, internet access and online instruction.** The trillions handed over to the rich must be redistributed to provide universal access to high-speed internet, food security, mental health care, special education support and all other resources needed to provide the best quality remote learning for every student and educator. All teachers and students must be provided with high-quality computer hardware and software and all other accessories. These programs must be expedited in rural areas, Native American reservations and the most impoverished working-class neighborhoods, which the ruling class has left to rot for decades.

- **Daily reporting by the schools to the community on results and positive COVID-19 cases.** We also demand that schools report daily cases within the schools and districts.

- **Income protection to all parents and caregivers who stay home with their children.** Educators are wholly aware of the needs of parents in ways that corporate-controlled politicians can never be. That is why the money handed over to the rich must be used to provide full income to those who cannot work because they must stay home with their children. At the same time, full unemployment benefits must be restored and

funding increased to protect families, and a permanent moratorium implemented to stop all evictions and home foreclosures.

- **Rank-and-file control over all reopening decisions.** All decisions regarding the viability of reopening schools for in-person learning must be determined democratically by rank-and-file committees of educators, school workers, parents and students, based on the independent assessment of trusted scientists and health experts.

- **For free speech and the protection of whistleblowers.** All those who speak out against unsafe working or learning conditions—whether in schools, factories, warehouses, hospitals or offices—must be defended against any victimization by employers or state officials. All workers who have been victimized must be rehired with back pay. No retaliation against students engaged in protests or strikes.

- **Halt all nonessential production.** Until the pandemic is contained, only key industries such as food production, medical care and logistics should remain open. Workers in those industries must be provided with the most advanced safety measures to prevent infection. All nonessential workers and laid-off workers must be provided with full unemployment benefits and access to free health care.

- **A mass global vaccination program.** Billions of doses of vaccines must be distributed to every country in the world, along with the necessary equipment and materials for distribution and production of the vaccine.

- **An end to patent protections and the blocking of vaccines and health supplies to any country.** The US government must not use the vaccine to bully other countries into accepting its dictates and must waive the property rights of vaccine manufacturers in order to save millions of lives. Vaccine production must be promoted on a mass scale to ensure that all people may become vaccinated.

To achieve these goals, the Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee advances three basic principles:

- This committee is completely independent from the AFT, NEA, the Pennsylvania State Education Association, APSCUF, AFSCME and the Teamsters. Educators can only organize and fight based on their own organization.

- Independent of both the Democrats and Republicans: This committee does not support either of these political parties which have enforced the reopening of schools and overseen mass death during the pandemic.

- There is enough wealth to solve this problem: While Democrats and Republicans say there are not enough resources for education, health care, unemployment benefits, the wealth of the rich has been skyrocketing. We say that this wealth created by the working people must be democratically controlled and used by the working class for the best interests of society as a whole.

For more information about joining this fight, email our committee at paedrankandfile@gmail.com, text (412) 336-8245 or visit this page.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact