

An open letter to the working class: The pandemic must be ended and lives saved in 2022!

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party (US)
30 December 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we approach the end of the year, workers in the United States and throughout the world must decide to act collectively and finally put an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. 2022 must not be another nightmarish year of mass infections, illness and death!

The social catastrophe of the last two years is the outcome of the criminal subordination of public health to the relentless accumulation of corporate profits and the private wealth of mega-millionaires and billionaires.

In terms of its cost in human lives, this pandemic certainly ranks among the greatest tragedies in American history. When this year began, 373,356 Americans had already succumbed to the virus. Today, that figure stands at 842,493, an increase of 469,137 deaths in 2021 despite the rollout of life-saving vaccines.

One out of every 100 seniors over the age of 65 have died. Life expectancy—the most critical indicator of public health—has now fallen two years in a row. This has never happened except during World War II, when the fall in life expectancy was caused by the loss of many young men.

But the impact of the pandemic has been worse than any previous war. More Americans have now died from COVID-19 than during four years of combat in the American Civil War (roughly 700,000) or during US involvement in World War II (407,000). Every day, another 1,500 Americans needlessly die from the disease.

Officially, 33.3 million Americans were infected with COVID-19 in 2021, but the real figure is far higher due to inadequate testing. In addition to the growing death toll, millions of people are grappling with the effects of Long COVID. This affliction can impact every organ system in the body, persist for decades, and leave the infected individuals with serious physical health problems and brain damage even more severe than that associated with lead poisoning.

Virtually everyone has a friend or family member who has

died from this horrible virus. Many of you reading this have yourselves been infected and may be suffering from Long COVID.

But even after two years, the rapid spread of Omicron carries with it the danger that the new year will be even worse than 2020 and 2021. On Wednesday, the US recorded a world record 484,377 daily new cases. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that 140 million Americans could become infected with Omicron in the next three months, with a peak of 2.8 million infections *each day* by the end of January.

Under conditions in which hospital systems are already strained to the breaking point, hospitalizations are once again surging throughout the country. More than 84,000 Americans are currently hospitalized with COVID-19, including record numbers of children who are more at risk from the Omicron variant.

Amid this unprecedented crisis, the stock market continues to soar because the Biden administration and state governments, regardless of whether they are controlled by Democrats or Republicans, refuse to take any measures that may undermine corporate interests.

Misinformation and falsehoods from the government feed a sense of discouragement, which is then used to promote outright defeatism towards the pandemic. The corporate-controlled media now argues that we have to “live with COVID,” which they say will inevitably become endemic. What does this even mean? What is the end goal of this policy, and when will the needless suffering and deaths of millions stop?

In fact, with the appropriate measures, the virus can still be eliminated over the course of only a few months. In China, the Zero COVID strategy led to the elimination of the virus by April 2020, with only two recorded deaths since May 2020. The methods used in China are well known and developed out of more than a century of experience fighting infectious diseases.

The principles of science and public health are constantly being ignored and falsified to impose a narrative to justify fully reopening businesses and the economy.

The new guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reducing quarantine and isolation periods from 10 to five days, are the latest in an unending series of destructive actions. The government has openly declared that its policy is to allow COVID-19 to spread indefinitely.

The reckless insistence on keeping factories and other workplaces open, and sending kids into school, flies in the face of everything that has been learned in the fight against infectious diseases. Centuries of scientific study have given humanity an arsenal of knowledge to fight disease. This knowledge was used in the 20th century, including in the United States, to eliminate diseases that were once leading causes of death, including polio, smallpox, measles, malaria, and yellow fever.

Modern science has shown that the closure of all nonessential workplaces and the transition to remote learning for all schools for a period of two months could quickly bring viral transmission under control and lay the basis for the full-scale elimination of COVID-19. These necessary lockdowns must be accompanied by the provision of full financial and social supports for all workers and small-business people affected.

Two-month lockdowns must be combined with the globally coordinated production and distribution of vaccines and high-quality masks to all countries, as well as the use of mass testing, contact tracing, the safe isolation and treatment of infected patients, and a dramatic expansion of health care infrastructure. At every essential workplace and hospital, workers must have access to the highest quality N95 or better masks, as well as modern filtration and ventilation systems. All nonessential domestic and international travel must cease immediately to allow for the elimination of the virus in each country.

The working class must take matters into its own hands. The fight to end the pandemic must be based on the following principles:

- The present policy of “herd immunity”—i.e., allowing COVID-19 to spread throughout the population—must be repudiated. A new strategy, directed toward the elimination and eradication of SARS-CoV-2, must be adopted.

- The policies implemented to stop viral transmission must be determined by the needs of public health. The protection of human life and safety must take absolute and unconditional priority over all corporate-financial interests. The costs of fighting the pandemic—including the payment of wages and salaries, compensation to small business owners,

full medical coverage for the ill, and payments to bereaved families—must be borne by corporations and a 100 percent tax on the windfall pandemic profits obtained by large investors through the run-up in the stock market.

- The fight against the pandemic must be conducted on a global scale. The pandemic cannot be stopped unless SARS-CoV-2 is eliminated in all countries. American workers must demand that vaccines be provided in necessary quantities, free of charge, to their class brothers and sisters in the less developed countries.

The Democrats and Republicans, big business and the corporate-controlled media will declare that these policies are 1) impossible to implement and 2) incompatible with the existing capitalist system.

The answer to the first objection is that it is impossible to accept the infection of millions of people and the massive loss of life.

As for the second objection, the answer is simply this: If capitalism can offer no solution to a crisis that threatens the lives and well-being of the vast majority of the population, then it should be gotten rid of and replaced with a socialist system that prioritizes life over profits.

The fight against COVID is, in essence, a struggle against capitalism. The tragedy of the past two years has made the case for the reorganization of the world economy in the interests of the working class.

We urge all workers to circulate this statement, initiate discussion at your workplace, form rank-and-file committees and win support for collective action to stop the spread of the pandemic.

Contact the Socialist Equality Party and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. We are anxious to discuss with you the situation in your workplace and to assist you in organizing the fight to end the pandemic.

Fraternally,
Socialist Equality Party (US)



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