

Vote “No” on the CTU-CPS deal to reopen infected schools and spread COVID-19! Educators must launch a walkout now to save lives!

Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
11 January 2022

Chicago teachers: Contact the Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee to continue the fight against in-person learning! Text 312-834-4773 or email chicagoeducatorscommittee@gmail.com.

Chicago teachers are being asked to vote on a death warrant. The move by the leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union to reopen schools to in-person learning will mean the sickness and death of teachers, parents, students and community members. This is what teachers are being asked to approve today.

The announcement of the CTU yesterday of a deal is an utter surrender to Mayor Lightfoot and the campaign by the Biden administration to send educators and 300,000 students back into infected schools, regardless of the cost to their health and lives.

In a gross and undemocratic manner, the CTU is seeking to overturn the will of the majority of educators and end the life-saving action taken by CPS teachers which is being supported by parents, students and workers across the country and the world.

The Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee calls on teachers to reject this agreement and organize rank-and-file committees, independent of the CTU, to prepare a citywide walkout and demand the resources necessary to implement high quality virtual-only instruction to all of our students.

On Monday, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) reported that the week ending January 6 saw 580,247 new pediatric COVID-19 cases, up 74 percent from the previous week’s record of 325,000 cases. There were also a record 1,636 pediatric hospitalizations and 14 additional deaths among

children.

The terms reached with CPS are wholly unscientific and predicated on accepting mass infections among students and staff. After posturing for months that it would reject any deal without a districtwide health metric to trigger a transition to remote learning, the CTU caved in to Lightfoot’s demand that only individual schools would close for five days if 30 percent (!) or more teachers are absent for two consecutive days due to testing positive for COVID-19 or are in quarantine from exposure. Even this will happen only if substitute teachers cannot bring the number to under 25 percent. Schools could also be closed if 40 percent of students are infected or in quarantine.

The CTU also gave up on demands for widespread testing of students on an opt-out principle, with the district agreeing to merely test 10 percent of students at each school. These 10 percent would not even be tested every week. Rather, just a portion of them would be selected randomly.

The only other mitigation measure agreed to by CPS, which the CTU has touted as a “win,” is that the school district will provide a limited supply of KN95 masks to CPS workers and students, which will likely amount to no more than a couple of masks per person. This is a “win”? Who do they think they are kidding?

Just like it did last winter, the CTU has sold out teachers to the demands of the Biden administration to reopen the schools. Claims by Lightfoot and her Democratic counterparts in New York City, Los Angeles and other big cities that “schools are the safest

places for children” and that they are solely concerned with the academic and emotional well-being of young people are cynical lies.

There is only one reason they want to pack children into crowded and dangerous classrooms, even if there are not enough healthy teachers to teach them. They want their parents to keep working and producing profits for the billionaires who have enriched themselves while more than 850,000 have died. There is no limit to the number of infections and deaths the White House and the ruling class as a whole will accept as long as there is no disruption to the rising stock markets.

For the past week, the fight by Chicago teachers to stop in-person learning has been the focal point of the class struggle in the US, galvanizing opposition among educators, parents and students across the country and internationally.

Last week, educators in San Francisco and Oakland launched wildcats in defiance of the teachers unions, which support Biden’s school reopenings. Today, high school students in New York City are organizing walkouts to demand virtual-only learning, and similar actions are being prepared by students in Boston, Portland, Oakland and other areas.

The corporate and political establishment, which has poured scorn on Chicago teachers, hopes that this dirty deal will allow them to beat back this growing resistance. But Chicago teachers cannot let this stand!

We call on educators to join the Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, which was formed last year to unite city teachers with the growing opposition of educators and other workers in the US and around the world to the spread of the pandemic.

It is a matter of scientific fact that the closure of schools is a vital tool in stopping the transmission of this deadly virus. This must be combined with a fight to close all nonessential businesses, compensate workers and small business owners for lost income, and implement a full program of public health measures, including universal testing, contact tracing, quarantining, and global vaccinations, to end the spread of the virus and eliminate it once and for all.

We urge educators to widely circulate this statement, contact your co-workers to ensure the largest “No” vote possible and prepare a citywide strike movement to stop the spread of COVID-19 and save lives.

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