

Biden's COVID-19 Preparedness Plan will keep schools and businesses open regardless of the death toll

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During his State of the Union address, President Joe Biden made the preposterous claim, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, “We’re leaving no one behind or ignoring anyone’s needs as we move forward!”

Yet, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) own directives leave in the lurch millions of moderately-to-severely immunocompromised people who have been told to consult with their doctors or “have a plan ready,” whatever this means. A quarter of Americans don’t have a primary-care provider, while nearly 30 million Americans are uninsured.

The new CDC directives are unscientific recommendations that endanger every adult and child in America. Its worst impact will be on the lives of the 10 million immunocompromised individuals that live in the US, as well as the 54 million people over 65, many with significant comorbidities. With only 29 percent of the population having received a booster, most American adults must be considered under-vaccinated against the immune evading variants that dominate.

Lastly, there are 75 million children for whom Omicron has been quite devastatingly severe. Since the end of October 2021 (four months), nearly 850 children died from COVID, accounting for 60 percent of all deaths in this age group during the entire pandemic.

What Biden “forgot” to mention while hailing his administration’s record on the pandemic and promises that schools would never close again, was that vaccine effectiveness against hospitalizations for children 5 to 11 years of age declined dramatically from 100 percent to 48 percent. During the Omicron surge, the rate of infection for these children was no different than for the unvaccinated. Vaccines had no benefit in terms of

protecting them against infection.

Meanwhile, with Biden’s endorsement, state after state has repealed all the mask mandates in schools, even as Omicron continues at historically high levels, and as the frequency of the BA.2 sub-variant continues to climb. In tandem with the scrapping of masks, the CDC has also rescinded its mandate for universal contact tracing, meaning the tracking of cases—a tenet of public health proven effective by centuries of experience—will no longer be required at schools. These initiatives only attempt to head off any rebellion among teachers and parents by depriving them of information about the unsafe conditions that will exist in classrooms for teachers and students alike.

As Theresa Chapple-McGruder, the director of the Department of Public Health in Oak Park, Illinois, said to *The Atlantic*, “It is public health’s job to protect everybody, not just those people who are vaccinated, not just those people who are healthy.” And as to the follow-up question, do “the CDC’s new guidelines meet the mark,” she replied, “Not at all!”

Indeed, COVID is a community disease and a public health emergency that affects everyone. A libertarian and individualistic approach to prevention of disease will do nothing to deter new waves of infection and the spawning of new variants, and will actually facilitate further catastrophes. The foundation of public health is the ability of centralized authority to direct measures guided by science to attack the causes of infection and make public and private spaces safe for everyone.

This means a comprehensive infrastructure overhaul of all indoor heating and ventilation based on specifications set by aerosol physicists and HVAC experts. And this is just the first step. Masks and tests

left in storage don't stop the spread of the virus. Tracking and tracing must be at the heart of any pandemic response with the stated goal of seeing the number of infections reduced to zero and kept there.

The deadly pandemic has devastated country after country principally due to the criminal policies that have placed the needs of financial institutions before the public health concerns of communities. For all Biden's rhetorical self-congratulation during his State of the Union address, his administration's deplorable track record on COVID-19 has built on the record of his unlamented predecessor, and made it even worse.

Scientists have taken the administration and the hypocrisy of the State of the Union address to task on these points.

Dr. Yaneer Bar-Yam, head of World Health Network, which is fighting for elimination of COVID, said of the State of the Union, "Testing was required to attend. Five senators and congressmen tested positive and did not attend. They are telling children and workers to go to school and work without tests. So, they take precautions for themselves they don't give others. That is just not OK."

Julia Raifman, Doctor of Science at Boston University, who is currently focusing her work on health and social policies that can reduce the burden of COVID-19, responded to the following excerpt taken from the White House's National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan: "*We know how to keep our businesses and our schools open with the tools that we have at our disposal. We've shown we can do it, even during the Omicron surge.*"

She wrote, "We cannot do *better* unless we face what happened and prepare for *better*. This is not what happened. There were widespread labor shortages and business closures. [More than] 150,000 people died of COVID since December 15, 2021. When will we face it and prevent more?"

Researcher Joshua Salomon, Professor of Medicine and core faculty member for Health Policy at Stanford University and Alyssa Bilinski, assistant professor at the Department of Health Services, Policy & Practice (HSPP) at Brown School of Public Health, attempted to provide a concrete response to the question, "How high will expected mortality reach before CDC recommends more prevention?"

Using the performance indicators recently set by the

CDC with emphasis on those that predict deaths three weeks later and then comparing it to historical "high" trends during the pandemic (200 weekly cases per 100,000), the result was death rates of 1,000 to 2,500 per day nationally, or 7,000 to 17,500 deaths per week.

Professor Salomon lamented, "As a level of mortality the White House and CDC are willing to accept before calling for more public health protection, this is heartbreaking. For the next surge to be less lethal, we need earlier signals, not later ones—and stronger prevention strategies, not weaker ones."

Putting this into perspective, the last time the daily COVID death toll was under 1,000 per day was in mid-August of 2021. In fact, the average daily death toll in America during the pandemic has been over 1,300 per day, or just over 9,000 per week, given 950,000 reported deaths.

In other words, the state of the pandemic *as it is now* is to become the measure of success. If 2022 ends up as deadly as 2021, when 475,000 people died, the Biden administration would construe that as a success. Two years ago, in March 2020, then President Donald Trump said that "if the US could keep the death toll between 100,000 to 200,000, that would be a very good job."

Today, the death toll is approaching 1 million. At the rate deemed to be acceptable by the White House and the CDC, that horrific total could reach 1.3 million or even more by Christmas, and this would be presented to the American people as a cause for satisfaction, a return to "normalcy." If, indeed, the US government even bothers to publish the numbers at all.



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