



RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 12

EFFECTIVE January 18, 2021

WHEREAS, As of Sunday, December 27, 2020, the Rhode Island Department of Health reported at least 82,066 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Rhode Island and a total of 1,704 fatalities in the state; and

WHEREAS, During the initial stages of the pandemic, state, and local public health orders required the temporary closure of Rhode Island public schools across the state to prevent and slow the spread of coronavirus; and

WHEREAS, In spite of the unprecedented public health crisis, Rhode Island public school districts and Providence Public School educators stepped up and quickly adapted to the significant challenges caused by school closures by shifting to virtual distance learning formats; and

WHEREAS, Despite the shift to distance learning, the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse effect on K-12 learning, particularly among low-income students of color; and

WHEREAS, Despite schools being closed for in-person learning for nearly 9 months, state officials made it a priority to reopen schools as a part of its recovery efforts, and nearly all school districts in Rhode Island reopened for full, in-person learning during the fall semester; and

WHEREAS, The impetus for this was to prevent “learning loss” and the educational consequences from school closures which disproportionately impact populations of students of color and their families, who were already facing stark achievement gaps prior to the COVID pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The disproportionate health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on BIPOC communities in Providence, including disproportionately high rates of job COVID-19 infections, job losses, compounded by limited access to technology and internet, only exacerbated the educational challenges and negative ramifications on student achievement in these communities, and;

WHEREAS, Urgent action is required for all school districts, but particularly urban education districts, in order to limit the incredible challenges schools face with in-person learning due to Covid-19 that can potentially have negative impacts on students in the long term; and

WHEREAS, So long as it is absolutely safe to do so, there is general agreement among educators, school administrators, parents, and public health professionals that schools should be able to stay open as long as possible in order to deliver quality in-person instruction and support our school children; and

WHEREAS, Providing vaccines to all school personnel and frontline essential workers, including teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, janitors, and other support staff will be key to reopening and keeping schools open and safe; and

WHEREAS, Since early vaccine supply will be limited, Rhode Island state health officials are developing a phased distribution plan in partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that will continue to establish the priority populations for vaccination; and

WHEREAS, The state has already begun vaccinating frontline health care workers, first responders, nursing homes, elderly and high-risk individuals with the first doses of available vaccines and it is in the interests of all residents of the State of Rhode Island to include school personnel in the next rounds of vaccination.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council hereby urges Governor Raimondo and the Rhode Island Department of Health to prioritize our public education system by providing teachers and school support staff with vaccines shortly after health care professionals so that we can safely reopen schools for optimal in-person learning.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Honorable Governor Gina Raimondo, the Rhode Island Department of Health, and the Rhode Island Department of Education.

BY CITY COUNCIL

JAN 07 2021

READ AND PASSED


PRES.


CLERK

Effective without the
Mayor's Signature



Shawn Selleck
City Clerk