

From: [Peel, Jackson](#)
To: [Press](#)
Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Rep. Smith urges Gov. DeSantis to make COVID vaccine immediately available to public school employees 65+ using district infrastructure for flu vaccines
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2021

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Rep. Smith urges Gov. DeSantis to make COVID vaccine immediately available to public school employees 65+ using district infrastructure for flu vaccines

Tallahassee, FL - As Florida continues full pandemic resurgence, **Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith (D-Orlando)** has sent a letter to Governor Ron DeSantis urging his administration to immediately revise its list of priority groups in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution process.



Florida House of Representatives

Representative Carlos Guillermo Smith

District 49

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January 12th, 2021

Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
Attn: Office of Open Government
400 S Monroe St.
Suite 209
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis,

Teachers and school district employees are essential to the lives and livelihoods of all Floridians during normal times. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they are an indispensable component of ensuring *"the quality and continuity of the educational process, the comprehensive well-being of students and families and a return to Florida hitting its full economic stride,"* – a state priority as described by DOE Commissioner Corcoran in EO-06. **That's why as a member of the House Pandemics and Public Emergencies Committee, I'm writing to urge your administration to revise its current policy and take action to include on your list of priority groups K-12 essential school district employees who are in direct contact with students (instructional, classified and administrative) in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution process.**

Hundreds of thousands of these essential school employees in Florida are returning to "brick and mortar" schools in January at the same time that "Florida is in full pandemic resurgence" according to the January 3rd White House COVID-19 Task Force report. Elevating and prioritizing those teachers

Committees:

State Affairs Committee, Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee, Professions & Public Health Subcommittee, Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee, Government Operations Subcommittee, Insurance & Banking Subcommittee

and employees in direct contact with students will reduce community spread and help our state mitigate the full COVID resurgence currently underway.

Even more urgent, is the need for your administration to make COVID vaccines immediately available to K-12 essential school district employees 65 years of age and older, who are currently in direct contact with students (instructional, classified and administrative) during this first phase of vaccine implementation.

In Orange County Public Schools, there are 875 district employees 65 years of age and older currently in direct contact with students. Given the relatively small number of employees, prioritizing this subset of vulnerable school district employees within the already existing 65+ authorization will not be difficult. **The state can move quickly and with immediate impact since most school districts already maintain contracts with third party vendors to administer vaccines for influenza. Distributing COVID vaccines to school districts who are ready and able to get them into people's arms can both expand state capacity for this rollout and mitigate community resurgence.**

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. I eagerly look forward to your response.

In equality,



Representative Carlos Guillermo Smith

Florida House of Representatives, District 49

CC: AdventHealth
Orlando Health

Committees:

State Affairs Committee, Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee, Professions & Public Health Subcommittee, Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee, Government Operations Subcommittee, Insurance & Banking Subcommittee

Representative Carlos Guillermo Smith offered the following statement:

"Governor DeSantis should make COVID-19 vaccines immediately available to K-12 essential Florida teachers and school district personnel 65+ currently in direct contact with students. In Orange, that's only 875 employees on the front lines in our schools. With most school districts already relying on third party vendors to administer flu vaccines, Florida can move quickly and with immediate impact while also expanding state capacity for the rollout and mitigating community resurgence. This is a WIN-WIN. Let's get it done!"

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