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Contra Costa County Supervisors Ask State to Prioritize Teachers for Vaccine

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Teachers should be considered "essential workers" and thus among the first people to get COVID-19 vaccinations, according to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, which this week formally asked Gov. Gavin Newsom and state health officials to give teachers priority for the vaccines.

Vaccinating teachers and all other school personnel at public, private and any other schools, the supervisors said, will better prepare them for reopening schools as early as possible.

"We're taking the initiative here ... to convey to the state, as it develops its vaccine priorities, that we want all school personnel to be prioritized as essential workers," Supervisor John Gioia said Tuesday.

Distance learning, he said, is not necessarily effective, especially in communities of color, and reopening schools as soon as it's safe is important.

Supervisor Diane Burgis noted the board is only making its stance clear, and has no power to give school workers vaccine priority. She also stressed the county doesn't have the authority to reopen schools -- that is up to each individual district, and influenced by the health orders in each county.

"This is only us in our role of supporting school districts, supporting school boards, parents and teachers who decide when it's time to reopen," Burgis said.

All California counties are now either in the state's restrictive purple tier or under even more restrictive stay-at-home orders, and schools aren't allowed to reopen under either of those classifications.

Contra Costa leaders now become part of a growing trend among area lawmakers, education leaders and others to implore state leaders to put teachers on the priority list for COVID-19 vaccines.

Last week, a group convened by San Francisco Supervisor Hillary Ronen called on Newsom and public health officials to put teachers third in line, behind only health care workers and nursing home residents, to get the vaccine.

This comes as the first supplies of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine arrive in the Bay Area this week. Contra Costa County got its first shipment of 9,715 doses

Tuesday morning, and the first front-line health workers had been vaccinated by late Tuesday afternoon.

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