

**The People's Response Network**

**to Covid-19**

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**New Chicago & Cook County Vaccine Requirements**

**Fail to Adequately Protect Workers & the Public!**

Once again Chicago’s Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Health Commissioner Arwady have failed to adequately protect the city’s frontline workers, the majority of whom are African American & Latino, by not including them in Tuesday’s Executive Order “Proof of Vaccination in Public Places," effective January 3, 2022.

This despite the fact that more than 1 million Chicagoans have no COVID vaccine, the city had 5,216 new COVID cases today, the highest daily total ever, almost 7 X the red/highest transmission category; both ICU & Non-ICU hospital beds are the most filled since January, 2021; and hospitalization and death rates of the unvaccinated are 3-5X higher than among the vaccinated.

Unlike New York City’s Vaccination Requirements, announced December 6th by Mayor DeBlasio, Chicago & Cook County are Not requiring any vaccine mandate for private sector workers, endangering the lives of tens of thousands of indoor employees.

New York City is implementing the first-in-the-nation vaccine mandate for private-sector workers. The mandate, which will take effect on December 27th, will apply to roughly 184,000 businesses.

This follows NYC vaccination mandates for City employees, childcare providers, and non-public school employees.

Ninety-four percent of the City workforce is vaccinated.

“New York City will not give a single inch in the fight against COVID-19. Vaccination is the way out of this pandemic, and these are bold, first-in-the-nation measures to encourage New Yorkers to keep themselves and their communities safe,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Mayor Lightfoot & Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle need to follow New York City’s public health best practices by both immediately sending vaccine teams into workplaces & extend the vaccine mandate to include all public & private sector workers.

In addition the Chicago rule has 2 important exemptions from vaccine requirements it should abolish that NYC does not: each of which will increase transmission of COVID Omicron.

“An individual 18 years of age or younger who enters a covered location to participate in an activity organized by a school or after-school program offered by any prekindergarten through grade twelve public or non-public school;” and “An individual who enters for the purposes of voting in a municipal, state, or federal election; or, pursuant to law, assisting or accompanying a voter or observing such election.”

Both the Chicago private worker vaccine exemption and the two above exemptions are consistent with Lightfoot & Arwady’s gutting of the public worker mandate on October 7, 2021 when they changed the mandate to a vaccine or test option.

Each of these have endangered thousands of Chicago workers and residents getting COVID infected.

Instead, a year ago, when vaccine first became available, they should have sent Chicago Department of Public Health staff to vaccinate workers in both public & private workplaces as Florence Kelly, the Hull House workers’ rights & anti-child labor crusader, forced the city & employers to do in 1894! during a smallpox epidemic.

Time and time again Arwady and Lightfoot have said the city’s COVID policies, rules and regulations are fine unless the situation gets worse.

That is not Public Health whose goal is to “prevent disease” in schools, workplaces and in our neighborhoods.

Public officials are supposed to act to save lives Before the COVID Pandemic gets worse, not wait until more people get infected and die before acting.

The same is true for Chicago Public Schools (CPS) chief Martinez, who has refused to both test students & staff weekly and to offer COVID vaccines in the schools each student goes to instead of forcing African American & Latino working class families to take time off from work to take their children to a clinic or pharmacy. Giving CPS families home test kits instead of testing students in their schools weekly is another harsh burden on families who are struggling to survive.

Finally, Illinois, Chicago and Cook County need to immediately change the definition of “fully vaccinated” to include boosters and transmit clear, multilingual messages to everyone that boosters are more important than ever to prevent serious illness, hospitalizations and death now that Omicron is dominant.

Governor Pritzker, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Mayor Lightfoot must follow the example of Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont and New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham who, since November, have defined “fully vaccinated” to include boosters.

It would be another major mistake to wait for the CDC to change definition of fully vaccinated to include booster shots. The CDC’s definitions, rules and guidelines on defining “fully vaccinated” and most other public health measures are not legally binding on any local and state health departments in the U.S. The City of Chicago, County of Cook, all other Illinois local health departments and the State can set better, safer rules than the CDC.

None of us are Safe until ALL of us are Safe

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