

I would like to provide: *	Written Public Comments
Select the meeting date:* *	August 19, 2021
My public comments are related to: *	COVID-19
Topic *	Mandate ACPS teachers and staff vaccinated or subject to additional testing for SY 2021-2022
Full Name *	Bridget Shea Westfall
What is your relationship to ACPS? *	Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

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Dear Dr. Hutchings, Chair Alderton and School Board Members Ms. Nolan, Mr. Nolan, Ms. Greene, Dr. Rief, Ms. Thornton, Ms. Lorber, Ms. Anderson and Ms. Gentry:

I am asking that ACPS mandate COVID-19 vaccines for teachers and staff, with limited exemptions for medical reasonable accommodations, subject to additional testing. In October 2020, Dr. Hutchings appeared on CNN with Jake Tapper and was quoted: "I think having all of our students at one time in our classrooms, it definitely, probably won't be until a vaccine occurs," Hutchings told CNN. Now we are starting a third year of school in a global pandemic, with the easiest mitigation strategy to keep students in school readily available: by vaccinating the adults around them, including teachers and staff.

The policy is simple: get vaccinated or be subject to additional testing. The federal government, military and private companies have instituted this policy, as have other school districts such as Arlington Public Schools, DC Public Schools, Prince Georges County Public Schools and Montgomery County Public Schools.

According to the CDC, the #1 way to prevent COVID-19 is vaccination among all eligible students as well as teachers, staff, and household members is the most critical strategy to help schools safely resume full operations. I understand vaccine hesitancy, because as a government supervisor, I had those hard conversations with staff on my team. We talked about the risks associated with not getting vaccinated and what was preventing them from getting vaccinated. ACPS had since January to have conversations with vaccine hesitant staff and to conduct education and outreach campaigns to staff and community members concerned about the vaccine.

This summer, ACPS had a missed opportunity to promote vaccination among eligible students, as well as teachers, staff and household members of students, teachers and staff. I follow ACPS social media accounts and are signed up for ACPS emails and saw little outreach to vaccinate ACPS students, teachers, staff and community members. Parents do not have updated vaccination rates for teachers

and staff other than what was shared in the spring.

While I was not surprised that the School Board called this special session in response to the Delta variant and community transmission rates, the fact that we are only beginning decisions five days before all ACPS schools begin classes and after Tucker started school is problematic. I urge ACPS to improve communications, involve community input in decision-making and address barriers to implementing policy decisions.
