

# Getting the Safety We Deserve:

## What All CPS Parents Should Know About the Fight to Keep Kids Safe From COVID & What Comes Next

### What Happened?

- Chicago Public Schools reopened schools in January without adequate pandemic planning resulting in a surge of new COVID cases. Teachers voted to only work remote until either their union and CPS reached a new safety agreement, the new COVID surge declined, or two weeks passed. They called for more safety measures in order to prevent community spread including greater testing and vaccinations, better contact tracing and notification, more resources and criteria for switching schools to remote during outbreaks.
- The Chicago Teachers Union had made these demands for months but took action when, despite growing community spread of COVID, schools restarted without adequate testing.
- CPS administration and the Mayor insisted on in-person classes and rather than moving schools to remote, closed down the school district and shut down learning for all.
- After 4 days of this lockdown, an agreement was reached that
  - Will have CPS provide teachers and students with more masks and rapid tests for every school's care room.
  - Dedicate more people and resources, such as at least one contact tracer for every school, and designated testing and vaccination captains to increase access.
  - Allow over the phone verbal consent to testing, and have 10% of randomly selected students be tested each week, if enough students to opt into the testing.
  - Improve guidelines for when schools will switch to remote due to COVID spread or staff shortages.
  - Created enforceable safety agreement guaranteeing masking and other critical protections despite recent judge ruling against mask mandates.

### Why were CPS Schools not ready for another COVID surge?

**The City didn't use our relief dollars wisely.** The City of Chicago and CPS received a combined \$4 billion from the federal government for COVID relief. However, Mayor Lightfoot shuffled the money around inside the budget to pay off big banks and pad the police budget instead of listening to community leaders demands for those funds to be used for critical services and programs to help Chicagoans through the pandemic.

**CPS administration and Mayor Lightfoot refused to listen to concerns of teachers and students in the buildings.** For months before the lockdown, CTU had been asking the district to agree to improve these conditions, but the schools new CEO, Pedro Martinez, thought an agreement wasn't necessary. The mayor and her head of public health kept saying schools were safe enough even though student and community vaccination rates at many schools were shockingly low, testing had low participation and more schools had increasing numbers of staff and students getting sick.

**CPS didn't accept help from Governor.** The Governor had been offering them additional tests, vaccination clinics and supplies for weeks before. CPS did not respond to the offer before schools restarted, and its own plans such as collecting tests from students over break failed.

## Are our schools safe now? What Happens Next?

- The improved safety measures won by Chicago's teachers will help but more has to be done to prevent new cases from spreading, especially in schools with the lowest testing and vaccination rates.
- Safety supplies are still inadequate and the measures agreed to so far may still not be enough if community spread increases again.
- We can help keep our kids healthy by keeping our communities healthy. We all can help by making sure ourselves, friends, and family are tested regularly and vaccinated if able.
- Parent and community voices are calling for CPS to include them more fully in decisions and to transparently use the federal relief funds the district is receiving to improve safety and care at the schools with the highest needs.
- Teachers and school staff will keep advocating to improve testing, tracing and vaccines and for the district to use its resources to make schools safer.
- We need to push our elected officials and institutions to put our health first, to use the resources they have for our safety before they give money to banks for fees and interest or financial assistance to corporate interests.

## Take Action!



Opt into CPS  
school testing



Help get our relief  
dollars back from  
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