

P-05-1119 Prioritise teachers, school and childcare staff for COVID-19 vaccination, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 17.01.21

Dyma wybodaeth i gefnogi fy neiseb:

This is a statement by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore:

15th December, 2020: “The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on children’s education around the globe. Vaccinating teachers is a critical step towards putting it back on track.

“At their peak in late April 2020, nationwide school closures disrupted the learning of almost 90 per cent of students worldwide. While that number has dropped since, there continues to be an unsupported assumption that closing schools may slow the spread of the disease, despite increasing evidence that schools are not a main driver of community transmission. As a result, as cases are skyrocketing in many countries around the world, communities are again closing schools. As of 1 December, classrooms are closed for nearly 1 in 5 schoolchildren globally – or 320 million children.

“UNICEF is calling for teachers to be prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, once frontline health personnel and high-risk populations are vaccinated. This will help protect teachers from the virus, allow them to teach in person, and ultimately keep schools open.

“While decisions about vaccine allocation ultimately rest with governments, the consequences of extended missed or impaired education are steep, especially for the most marginalized. The longer children remain out of school, the less likely they are to return, and the more difficult it is for their parents to resume work.

“These are difficult decisions that force difficult tradeoffs. But what should not be difficult is the decision to do everything in our power to safeguard the future of the next generation. This begins by safeguarding those responsible for opening that future up for them.”

A statement like this from a lady of such power should instantly change the minds of world leaders. I do hope that the AMs see worth in this petition and this statement, but if not, I hope that Kirsty Williams stands up and fights for the workers of the sector she is responsible for.

I am appalled that Kirsty Williams is not fighting for the education and childcare workforce to be safe in their workplace by being prioritised for a vaccine. There is immense pressure on school and childcare staff at the

moment and the government seem to be fully aware of that, but we still aren't eligible to be prioritised for a vaccine.

I can speak more strongly on behalf of education staff as I myself am a teacher. My current concerns include:

- Having to teach in a new and different way online that many aren't used to
- Having to worry about catching a virus at my workplace that could not only be deadly to me, but to my family members
- Knowing a new curriculum is being rolled out from September 2022 and no postponement of that operation
- Knowing that the Education Minister is [stepping down at the election]
- Being aware that school children are significantly behind regarding where they should be in regards to skills development

There is one concern that can be addressed easily here. It can be resolved by prioritising teachers, school and childcare staff for the COVID-19 vaccination. Once we feel safe in our workplace, we can work on getting children back on track and we can prepare for the new curriculum.

Kirsty Williams thanks school staff in her videos online, but if she really was that grateful for our "hard work and dedication", she would stand up to safeguard the sector she is liable for.

Thank you.