

Gov. Abbott's executive order continues to put Texans between politics and science



The Immunization Partnership

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Two days after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted full approval for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for individuals 16 years of age and older, Gov. Greg Abbott used an executive order to forbid any state or local governmental entity from mandating any COVID-19 vaccine.

The governor's order not only prohibits vaccine mandates, but it also reiterates that public or private entities receiving public funds cannot verify a person's COVID-19 vaccination status. The executive order will remain in effect while the Texas Legislature debates vaccine mandates and facilities access, which the Governor has added to the final days of the second special session.

"Maintaining, in the governor's words, the status quo through executive order while legislators deliberate and debate means Texans – children and adults – will continue to be caught between politics and science," said Hill Powell, interim executive director of The Immunization Partnership. "On the day the governor issued this executive order, more than 13,900 Texas were hospitalized with COVID, patients were turned away from

closed hospital emergency rooms, and intensive care unit beds were full, mostly with unvaccinated COVID patients.”

Since the pandemic began, Texans have looked for leadership to keep them safe. But, instead of public health leadership that uses science-based evidence to protect our communities, Texans have seen politically driven decisions inconsistent with existing public health requirements. For example, Texas public schools require a set of FDA-approved childhood vaccinations against diseases such as measles and meningitis, which can result in serious illness, long-term health complications or death. COVID-19 can also cause serious illness, long-term health complications or death. However, the governor has expressly prohibited the state's public schools from considering requiring the approved vaccine to protect our children, and those who cannot receive the vaccine.

The Immunization Partnership stands with our public health partners in saying our elected officials must rely on our public health experts to keep us safe. Arbitrary orders that disregard the health of the community are reckless. Local health authorities and public health experts must not be forced to go against effective public health solutions.

Texas is blessed with having many of the world's experts in public health, epidemiology, pediatrics and infectious disease.

“These dedicated public health and medical experts cannot and will not ignore science, and hard medical evidence in the face of political pressure,” Powell said. “Their overriding concern every day of this pandemic is the health and safety of their fellow Texans who are our parents and children, our neighbors and friends. And yes, that concern includes those whose political and ideological beliefs have extended and expanded this deadly pandemic.”

The Immunization Partnership calls upon state lawmakers to stand strong in support of medicine and science because every day brings preventable sickness and sorrow to many of their constituents. We believe our elected representatives must allow our public health experts to take the lead in bringing all of us to the other side of this pandemic.

The Immunization Partnership is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission to eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases by educating the community, advocating for evidence-based public policy and supporting immunization best practices. For more information, visit <https://www.immunizeUSA.org>.