

From: [Kathryn Houk](#)
To: [Joseph P. Filippi](#)
Subject: Support Vaccine Mandate for NSHE Institutions
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Hello,

My name is Kathryn Houk, and I am an Assistant Professor and the Health Literacy & Community Engagement Librarian at the UNLV School of Medicine Library, although I am writing to you today in my capacity as a private citizen. In my job, I have the privilege and opportunity to not only train the next generation of physicians in Nevada on science communication and critical interpretation of research, but also in providing our Las Vegas community the opportunity to access health information focused specifically on their needs and interests. The United States faces a health literacy crisis, which only compounds the lack of information literacy that has led to the rampant disinformation and misinterpretation of communication around vaccine safety. It is clear from reading the other public comments that have been submitted thus far that many concerned members of our community suffer from low health literacy and would benefit from more instruction in information literacy and the scientific process and more opportunities to sharpen their critical thinking.

I am vaccinated, but I know that several colleagues and even medical students have babies and children who are not. If any one person were to infect someone with an unprotected child, it is unclear what the consequences might be on those children. I also have a compromised immune system, and though I have actually taken a booster dose, I still do not know if my underlying conditions would cause more serious complications or even long-term side effects should I become ill with COVID. Nevada already suffers from a shortage of physicians and health care providers, including hospital beds, for our population size, and pediatric specialists are even rare should there be a spike of cases in children.

I stand with the 632 faculty members, 90 staff members, and 451 students who have signed the petition (so far) for mandatory vaccinations on our campus. We currently require vaccination for less transmissible diseases with lower mortality rates. The argument that the vaccines are unsafe due to their emergency status is false, and a few minutes of research reveals the long history of the development of the vaccine technology. When coupled with a worldwide focus and funding, this led to a seemingly fast turnaround, but all safety and efficacy protocols were followed. I know the vaccine is safe. All the research supports that. I know that the vaccine side effects are much milder than COVID's side effects. All the research supports that. I think it is a great tragedy that so many members in our community do not know that, but that is why we have governing bodies who create regulations to keep us safe. The average UNLV student doesn't need to know how the vaccines were created for measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, or meningitis. They just know they have to submit proof of vaccination before they can register for classes, and they do. COVID does not and should not be any different. UNLV serves 30,000 students, and it is easier to keep the students, staff, faculty and all of their families safe by mandating a vaccine than to rely on the expense and time of self-reporting and contact tracing.

Thank you.

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