

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

BRYCE E. REEVES
17TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT
ALL OF ORANGE COUNTY; ALL OF THE
CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG; AND PART OF
ALBEMARLE, CULPEPER, LOUISA,
AND SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTIES
POST OFFICE BOX 7021
FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA 22404



July 9, 2021

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
REHABILITATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES, CHAIR
COURTS OF JUSTICE
GENERAL LAWS AND TECHNOLOGY
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS
RULES

Dear Virginia College and University Presidents,

In your preparations for the 2021-2022 school year, I would strongly encourage you not to require proof of a COVID-19 vaccination for your students to attend. I will support you encouraging your students to get vaccinated, but not mandating vaccination.

I am aware of Attorney General Mark Herring's opine, dated April 26, 2021, in which he believes you have the legal authority to require a vaccine for in-person attendance on campus for classes and activities. Please keep in mind that Attorney General Herring's opinion is just that, his opinion. I have consulted with other constitutional attorneys who believe the AG's opinion on this issue is misguided. They are prepared to file lawsuits against your institutions should you mandate proof of the COVID-19 vaccination. Regardless of the AG's legal opinion supporting your right to require proof of vaccination, I strongly suggest you moderate this policy by making COVID-19 vaccination optional for your students, faculty and staff.

First, many students come from families who have diverse religious beliefs that would prevent them from taking a vaccine. It is wrong and misguided to discriminate against these students.

Second, there are many Virginians who remain fearful of the vaccine, citing unknown and potentially long-term health consequences. They deserve to have more time to evaluate the effects of vaccination before they make their choice. Personally, I have received the Pfizer vaccine and trust that it is safe, but that was my decision. Let everyone make their own decision.

Finally, the latest Virginia Department of Health data indicates that COVID-19 spread, hospitalizations, and deaths are at near record lows. The numbers also reveal that nearly all new cases are limited to those who are unvaccinated. While you may think that this goes against my recommendation, it does not. Let the students decide if they wish to be vaccinated or not, and they will inherit the risk of getting sick. Based on the VDH data, they are not endangering those who have been vaccinated.

Over the past two months, we have seen thousands of people gathered together, without masks or proof of vaccination. Events like professional sports, concerts, and other social gatherings have taken place without the requirement of vaccination. I hope you will adopt the same policy.

In service to the Commonwealth,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryce E. Reeves".

The Honorable Bryce E. Reeves
Senate of Virginia, 17th District