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August 30, 2021

The Honorable Bill Lee
State Capitol, 1st Floor
600 Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee:

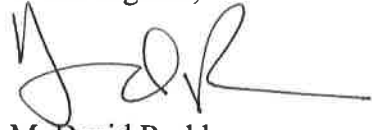
I am writing to request that you engage the Legislature and the Tennessee Department of Health to review and add COVID-19 vaccinations to the list of required immunizations for college and university students in the state of Tennessee. Immunization requirements have been in place in Tennessee for decades and previously followed CDC guidelines and related medical advice (<https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/immunization-program/ip/immunization-requirements/college-immunization-requirements.html>). As you are aware, current immunization requirements include chickenpox, hepatitis, meningitis and measles. Given that the risks of COVID-19 are potentially lethal, coupled with overwhelming scientific evidence of vaccination efficacy and now formal approval of the FDA in place, I believe this is warranted to protect the health and well-being of all on college and university campuses across Tennessee. This past week, an average of 300+ children were hospitalized per day across the United States, and the national average of deaths per day exceeded 900. As with all required immunizations in Tennessee, there are exceptions (e.g., individuals that can document credible history of illness/immunity, medical risks associated with vaccination, residential status on campus).

I recognize that current state law (SARS-CoV-2, TCA 68-5-115) states: "The governor shall not issue an executive order, a state agency or department shall not promulgate a rule, and a political subdivision of this state shall not promulgate, adopt, or enforce an ordinance or resolution, that requires a person to receive an immunization, vaccination, or injection for the SARS-CoV-2 virus or any variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus." Additionally, current state law (TCA 68-5-117) also prevents requiring proof of vaccination: "A state or local governmental official, entity, department, or agency shall not require proof of vaccination as a condition of entering upon the premises of a state or local government entity, or utilizing services provided by a state or local government entity." Given these legal restrictions, I request your office engage the Tennessee Department of Health in a formal review of the relevant COVID-19 vaccinations for inclusion on the list of required immunizations in the state of Tennessee, consistent with current CDC guidelines, related medical recommendations and the potential lethal consequences of the illness.

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I hope you will give serious consideration to this request, as I firmly believe it an essential step in protecting the safety and well-being of all those on college and university campuses in Tennessee. It has never been more important for us to follow the medical advice from credible authorities we have trusted for decades.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. David Rudd', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

M. David Rudd
President