



July 14, 2020

To: Distribution

From: Pandemic Working Group

Re: **COVID-19: California Schools ~ CDC & Schools ~ Plasma Therapy ~ Don't Go There**

Silent Roll-Call. As reported by the LATimes, Los Angeles Unified School District campuses will not reopen for classes on August 18 and will remain online until further notice. Citing the soaring infection rate in the county, Superintendent Austin Beutner said that, at this stage of the pandemic, the district cannot come close to protecting the health and safety of a half-million students and 75,000 employees in the nation's second-largest school system. In an interview with the Times, Mr. Beutner said, "Let me be crystal clear. We all know the best place for students to learn is in a school setting, but we're going in the wrong direction. And as much as we want to be back at schools and have students back at school – can't do it until it's safe and appropriate." Beutner's decision followed the adamant urging of the L.A. teachers' union, which called for campuses to remain closed. San Diego USD is following suit as are a number of regions in Northern California, including West Contra Costa County, East Side Union and the Oakland Unified School District.

By contrast, as reported by Forbes.com, the Orange County Board of Supervisors (pictured here from MercuryNews) voted 4-1 last night to recommend the reopening of area schools without masks or social distancing. Their measure, however, was non-binding and leaves the final decision up to individual districts and superintendents. The board's "white paper" on the subject placed the perceived benefit of in-school learning above the perceived risk, concluding that children "are less likely to be symptomatic . . . to become infected and spread infection" (citing the American Pediatric Association) and that parents are "in the best position to determine the education environment that best suits their children rather than government officials." Other critics, such as USC's Paula Cannon, a microbiologist, are not so sure, noting "The evidence is showing



so far that children are less likely to be infected, but that comes from the background of our children not being in school." Under the board's order, returning to an in-person school will be voluntary, and it is intended that parents may send their children to other (presumably, remote) schools, if they wish.

Where is the CDC on This? Funny you should ask. While Vice President Mike Pence had expressed dissatisfaction with the CDC's published set of school reopening guidelines, saying that he did not want them to "be a reason for not reopening," as reported by MSNNews.com, CDC's director, Robert Redfield, has stated that "our guidelines are our guidelines" and that there will be "no revision" – rather, the CDC would shore up its publication with some additional

supporting documents. Dr. Redfield is pictured here from MSN. In short, the Administration continues to push for reopening without CDC's "tough and expensive" measures (in the words of President Trump), while the CDC's guidelines, which include recommendations on distance between desks, face coverings for older students and teachers and increased sanitization, will likely remain unchanged. However, the federal government does not directly control public education in the states; its only real point of leverage is in respect of federal funding which, in many districts accounts for 10% or less of revenues. Accordingly, various states are taking different approaches (New York has a part-remote, part-in person approach, while Florida is going for full reopening) and various counties, cities and districts within states are implementing various approaches (as in California). In some cases, these plans relate to pandemic curves (as with Los Angeles – bad curves, no reopening - and New York – good curves, hybrid reopening), and in some cases they do not (as with Florida – bad curves, full reopening). And there you have it – all tied up with a bow.



Plasma-based Therapies Stalling Out. As reported by the New York Times, a promising treatment for giving uninfected people months' long protection against COVID-19, namely, upper-arm injections of antibody-rich blood plasma from coronavirus survivors, seems to be stalling out. The same technology has been effective in preventing diseases such as hepatitis A and is currently used as an intravenous treatment for patients who have the virus. A lower-strength injection could potentially be administered to healthcare workers or nursing home patients as a preventative. However, federal officials and pharmaceutical companies are presently and primarily focused on treating people who are already sick, rather than preventing infections in those who are healthy. Dr. Michael Joyner of the Mayo Clinic said that the lack of interest in this technology "is a real head-scratcher." Infectious disease experts point out that the financial considerations may also militate against investment in developing and manufacturing plasma shots, as vaccines will likely replace them in the near future. Researchers from Yale, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Duke and the University of California have pled their case with lawmakers but without success.

Don't Go There. In a more straightforward story, as reported by MSN Bestlife, White House COVID testing director Adm. Brett Giroir advised viewers during yesterday's "Today" show that, if there is one place you should avoid going during the pandemic it's – wait for it – that's right, you guessed it – bars. Bars also topped the list of least safe destinations in recent surveys from four infectious disease experts on MLive and a host of physicians with the Texas Medical Association. So Admiral Giroir is not the only one saying this. Interestingly, a single bar in Michigan was the source of 152 coronavirus infections in early July despite being at 45% capacity and having six feet of distance between tables. Let's think of why this could be. First, most bars are loud, because they play music, so you have to shout above the music. Second, everyone is drinking, so they're loud, plus they're trying to talk over the music and the other loud people, so it gets louder. And after three or four drinks, they don't even know they're being loud. Third, in hot seasons, indoor bars are typically air conditioned, and heaven knows whether they've changed the air filters since 1967. And fourth, people tend to hang around until they play "Happy Trails" or put up the chairs. There you have it – a high viral dose delivered via shouting over an extended period of time in close quarters. That's a cocktail for success, virally speaking.

If you have any questions or comments on this advisory, please contact either kellyw@amvac.com or timd@amvac.com.