



Washington State Legislature

August 20, 2021

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee:

We reiterate what we have said consistently: We are vaccinated and have urged others to do so. However, we do not support your vaccine mandates – which, to date, are the strictest in the nation. Compulsion is not an effective strategy. Further, no one should lose their job and income because they make the personal health-care choice to not get vaccinated.

We assume you are receiving many of the emails and calls that are filling up the inboxes of state lawmakers. If so, you know many Washingtonians across the state consider your emergency proclamations to be extreme – including people who are generally supportive of vaccines. If not, we want to bring these voices and concerns to your attention.

Our state faces critical labor shortages and extreme stress in important systems. There are staffing challenges for hospitals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, schools, first responders, corrections, and state agencies. We have been told by workers that they and others will leave their professions due to your vaccine mandates. If you break these systems, they cannot be easily rebuilt, and it will add more stress on the delivery of critical services. These outcomes concern us.

Others share our concerns. Washington Federation of State Employees President Mike Yestramski said in The Seattle Times today that he is concerned there are no backup plans for staffing if large numbers of employees quit or get fired. He also noted some state agencies are already facing staffing shortages.

We urge your office to closely monitor, record, and share these staffing metrics with us on a regular basis. Our state must also have plans in place to prevent workforce catastrophes, especially when critical systems in health care, public safety, and education are already stressed.

In closing, we also ask that you provide clear guidance to those who seek exemptions from your vaccine mandates. These processes need to be transparent, and the forms should be made available as soon as possible.

We look forward to your response and welcome a dialogue.

Sincerely,

Senator John Braun
Senate Republican Leader

Representative J.T. Wilcox
House Republican Leader