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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

53 Philly schools to reopen next week

Black district teachers fall into vaccine racial gap

Michael D'Onofrio
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

African Americans are underrepresented among a newly targeted group getting a significant chunk of the city's weekly COVID-19 vaccines: District teachers.

Black teachers make up 24.5% of the approximately 9,100 educators in the School District of Philadelphia for the 2020-21 school year, according to data listed on the district's website. African Americans make up 44% of the city's population.

White teachers are overrepresented among the teacher pool, accounting for nearly 67% of district teachers, while making up 34% of the city's population.

The racial demographics among district teachers reveal inequities facing the rollout of the Kenney administration's vaccination program, which has administered fewer vaccines to Blacks and other people of color in terms of their share of the city's population.

Last week the Kenney administration kicked off a partnership with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) to vaccinate city educators and school staff in district, charter and private schools, as well as day-care workers.

The Kenney administration has pledged to commit up to 9,000 doses a week to vac-

TEACHERS » 4A



School District of Philadelphia Superintendent William Hite talks at the podium Monday while Mayor Jim Kenney looks on at the Richard Wright Elementary School. —TRIBUNE PHOTO/ABDUL R. SULAYMAN

THE 53 SCHOOLS

A list of Philadelphia schools that will open their doors Tuesday, Page 4A

Additional school reopenings will be announced each Monday.

District, teachers agree: Pre-K to grade 2 students can choose in-person classes

Chanel Hill
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

School District of Philadelphia administrators along with city and teachers' union leaders announced plans Monday for pre-K through second-grade students to return to school buildings for in-person learning starting March 8.

"This has been a challenging year for all of us, but at this time I'm excited to have our young people back in the classroom," said School Superintendent William Hite during a news conference at Richard Wright Elementary School in North Philadelphia.

"We can do it safely if we're committed to doing this together, and together is how we got to this point."

Fifty-three schools have already been approved to resume in-person learning using the district's hybrid model — a mix of in-person and remote learning. Students who will be returning selected the hybrid learning model last fall.

Teachers and staff at those 53 schools will report to work this Wednesday. The following Tuesday will be the first time district students will have in-person learning since last March due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"From there, a cohort of new schools will come back each week until all pre-K to second-grade students who opted into the hybrid model in the fall have returned," Mayor Jim Kenney said.

Kenney said the goal is to return students to more schools each week and have all pre-K to second-grade schools approved by March 22.

"Each week the announcement of what schools will be opening will be made Monday, teachers will return to those buildings on Wednesday and students will return the following Monday," Kenney said.

The announcement comes after a mediation process led by a city-appointed neutral third-party. The district and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) agreed on a process that allows PFT to

SCHOOLS » 4A

States easing virus limits despite experts' warnings

Heather Holingsworth
Tammy Webber

MISSION, Kan. — With the U.S. vaccination drive picking up speed and a third formula on the way, states eager to reopen for business are easing coronavirus restrictions despite warnings from health experts that the outbreak is far from over and that moving too quickly could prolong the misery.

Pennsylvania is easing restrictions on large gath-

erings, paving the way for a limited number of fans to attend sporting events. The commonwealth is also lifting restrictions on out-of-state travel.

Massachusetts on Monday made it much easier to grab dinner and a show. In Missouri, where individual communities get to make the rules, the two biggest metropolitan areas — St. Louis and Kansas City — are relaxing some measures. Iowa's governor recently lifted mask

requirements and limits on the number of people allowed in bars and restaurants, while the town of Lawrence, home to the University of Kansas, now lets establishments stay open until midnight.

Mike Lee, who owns Trezo Mare Restaurant & Lounge in Kansas City, said he hopes increased vaccine access, combined with warmer weather, will improve business.

VIRUS » 5A



An employee with the McKesson Corporation packs a box of the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine into a cooler for shipping from their facility in Shepherdsville, Ky., Monday. —POOL PHOTO/TIMOTHY D. EASLEY

Democratic bill would make sweeping election changes



Demonstrators in Atlanta chain themselves together Monday to protest voting restrictions that the Georgia House recently passed. —ALYSSA POINTER/ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION VIA AP

Brian Slodysko

WASHINGTON — As Congress begins debate this week on sweeping voting and ethics legislation, Democrats and Republicans can agree on one thing: If signed into law, it would usher in the biggest overhaul of U.S. elections law in at least a generation.

House Resolution 1, Democrats' 791-page bill, would touch virtually every aspect of the electoral process — striking down hurdles to voting erected in the name of election security, curbing partisan gerrymandering

and curtailing the influence of big money in politics.

Republicans see those very measures as threats that would both limit the power of states to conduct elections and ultimately benefit Democrats, notably with higher turnout among minority voters.

The stakes are prodigious, with control of Congress and the fate of President Joe Biden's legislative agenda in the balance. But at its core, a more foundational principle of American democracy is at play: access to the ballot.

"This goes above partisan interests. The vote is at

the heart of our democratic system of government," said Fred Wertheimer, president of the nonpartisan good government organization Democracy 21. "That's the battleground. And everyone knows it."

Barriers to voting are as old as the country, but in more recent history they have come in the form of voter ID laws and other restrictions that are up for debate in statehouses across the country.

Rep. John Sarbanes, a Maryland Democrat who sponsored the bill, said that outside of Congress "these aren't controversial reforms."

Much of it, he noted, was derived from recommendations of a bipartisan commission.

Yet to many Republicans, it amounts to an unwarranted federal intrusion into a process that states should control.

"It imposes from Washington, D.C., a one-size-fits-all regulatory scheme on each state," Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., said Monday during a hearing on the bill. "What's worse, it does this even though states have been traditionally allowed to gener-

ELECTION » 5A

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