

The First Amendment
 Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." — Thomas Jefferson (1800)

COVID cannot be defeated without vaccinations

(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

Dear community members,
 We are asking for a moment of your time on behalf of Eugene Emergency Physicians, a group of 37 emergency medicine physicians and 13 physician assistants (PAs) contracted with PeaceHealth. We cover the RiverBend, University District, and Cottage Grove Emergency Departments.

For 30 years, we have cared for this community. We live here, our children attend school here, we see you in the grocery store. Please believe us when we tell you that we have the community's best interest at heart, because it is our community as well. You have trusted us to care for you.

This pandemic has tested us like never before. We have been front line witnesses from the beginning. Every physician and PA in our group has been voluntarily vaccinated for months and has looked on with sadness and despair as public health has become polarized. We have chosen to speak out in order to lend our voice to the growing cry for vaccinations to protect our community.

We are appreciative and fully supportive of the recent PeaceHealth initiative to require COVID-19 vaccinations for health care workers. We state unequivocally that vaccinations are our best hope to keep our community safe. If you have chosen not to be vaccinated, we strongly ask you to reconsider. If you have questions or concerns about the vaccine, please reach out to a trusted health care provider, Lane County Public Health, or ask us if you see us.

As of August 18, PeaceHealth

Oregon hospitals have diagnosed 1,037 patients with COVID-19 in 2021. Of those, more than 96 percent were not fully vaccinated. Although it is possible to contract COVID-19 following vaccination, it is clear that the chances of hospitalization or death are exponentially lower.

We are running out of hospital beds in our state. We may soon be unable to adequately care for patients needing surgery for other ailments or treat medical conditions unrelated to COVID-19.

GUEST VIEWPOINT Physicians and PAs of Eugene Emergency Physicians

We are rapidly losing the ability to care for all of the community's needs.

We know that many of you will read this letter and have information from various sources that you feel supports the choice not to vaccinate yourself or your family. We urge you to take a moment and consider the impacts of your decisions on the greater community. These vaccines are safe and effective.

We have heard concerns from patients that some vaccinated people are becoming infected with COVID-19. Yes, this is true, but the likelihood of contracting the virus is substantially lower. If you become infected following vaccination, the disease course is significantly milder.

You may be very healthy and have a strong immune system. You may feel you will be safe. We have cared for and admitted many patients who have had this very thought.

Unfortunately, we are admitting younger and healthier people with complications from COVID-19. It is not a bad cold. It is not a bad

flu. It hurts. It keeps people awake at night because of pain. It causes fluid to build up in the lungs making breathing difficult. It is awful even in those not sick enough to require hospitalization.

Yes, some people are lucky and have a milder case, but is this a risk you really want to take for you or your parents or your children? We urge you to consider your circle of friends and family. Do you have or know children who are too young to be vaccinated? We are seeing a rise in cases in our pediatric patients. Do you have elderly relatives who have chronic diseases? They are more likely to suffer devastating illness and death.

This is not only about you and your healthy immune system. It is about the greater good of the community. We cannot keep fighting this fight without your help.

We are seeing people resist not just vaccinations, but the return of mask mandates. We too are tired of masks. We wear them every day, all day. We cannot defeat this disease without increasing vaccination numbers, and we cannot control the spread without masks. Vaccines and masks work. If you want your children to return to school in person, please vaccinate. If you want your children not to be masked in school, please vaccinate. If you want to go to the store unmasked, please vaccinate.

If anything in this letter resonates with you, please go get vaccinated. The following link lists vaccine clinics in our community: www.lanecountyor.gov/vaxclinics.

Thank you for consideration of our perspective. We feel fortunate to be part of such a wonderful community and look forward to a return to "normalcy." This return can be hastened by your participation in vaccinations and following other public health mandates.

LETTERS

AN APPEAL FOR LEADERSHIP

Dear Governor Brown,
 I am a man who is fighting cancer, and I am concerned about taking the vaccine.

From this place, I want you to hear that we need clear messaging and honesty from you, and our leadership, right now.

I'm asking you humbly to really achieve public health and safety within our state. Please do more to create candid, public conversations and exposition of facts in regard to COVID and its vaccines, not just throw out more mandates.

We, the citizens of this state, have been faced with an unpredictable, unprecedented, changing reality — one that has been inconsistently communicated to us.

After missteps in, or lack of messaging from, our heads of state, and inconsistencies from the CDC; historic lies, corruption, and self-interest from pharmaceutical companies and the medical industrial complex; and a histrionic, outrage-seeking interpretation of it all from media; how could we not be mistrustful? How can you truly blame us?

We need honesty and clarity. We're not seeing much of that at all, except by way of accidental conversation, one neighbor talking to another, about a friend of theirs

who had a bad reaction or a relative who hasn't recovered or a child in a neighboring town who may never be the same. I'm hearing too many of these stories. This does not reflect a government of clear, effectively messaged leadership.

Please Governor Brown, if you seek to lead not simply to perform the role of leadership, support thoughtful public conversations, encourage authentic reflection on past mistakes in messaging and scientific interpretation, confront current failures of the CDC, and convey to us a clear understanding of what we know and what we actually don't yet know about both this virus and its vaccines.

Please help us, the people, reasonably make up our own minds. Help us to decide what is good for us.

What I am saying, Governor Brown, is please lead us. Our communities, our state, and our nation for that matter, cannot afford your impatience or indifference.

—Alan Baas
 Cottage Grove

CLASS OF '70 GIVES 'SHOUT OUT'

Recently, the Cottage Grove High School Class (CGHS) of 1970

held its 51st reunion and it was a well-attended rousing success.

We want to send a big "shout out" to a couple of great local businesses who helped us make it so. Shady Oaks provided a delicious meal in a beautiful setting, and Covered Bridge Brewing Group was there with cooling refreshments.

We are very excited to announce that our generous class will be donating over \$4,000 to the Cottage Grove Community Foundation to provide scholarships for 2022 CGHS graduating seniors.

We raised the money through donations, our bucket raffle, and our chair auction. Two classmates refurbished and donated a pair of auditorium chairs from the old CGHS. Bidders who won the bid would donate them back for another round and we ended up with \$900 on that item alone!

We were happy that the final winner is a Cottage Grove resident, because not only did he graduate from CGHS, but so did his father and his kids - a fitting home for a piece of CGHS history.

Attendees were impressed with what their hometown has to offer! Thanks, CG!

—Class of 1970
 Cottage Grove High School

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Letters to the Editor Policy

The Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

Political/Election Letters:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must: 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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