



State of New Hampshire

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCORD

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As the physicians in the NH House and professionals with extensive public health experience, we strongly urge you not to hold a legislative session in the Representatives Hall in October. New Hampshire's current high COVID infection rate presents a great risk of further spread.

Statistically, while test positivity is in the 6% range, the probability of at least one Representative bringing COVID to the Statehouse is practically 100%. This pandemic is not over. At particular risk are those over 65, those who have existing diagnoses, and those whose immunity is diminished.

Given that majority House members have not been wearing masks to committee meetings, a meeting of the full House in Representatives Hall seriously risks becoming a super-spreader event. And since neither vaccinations, nor masks, nor HVAC upgrades are 100% effective in preventing the spread of disease, there is no way for members to protect themselves. Since we come from every corner of NH, we would then be highly likely to bring COVID back to every corner of our state. The House would then be responsible for spreading disease to families, children and elders.

Given that most House members are over 65, we need to remember that members who do come down with COVID are at serious risk for adverse sequelae. Booster shots may minimize this risk, but at present only those who got Pfizer vaccines are eligible. Data from Israel and elsewhere suggests immunity wanes at about 6 months, especially in those over age 65 and those who are immuno-compromised, so members who were immunized last winter are no longer well protected.

Given the airborne spread of COVID, we recognize social distancing does not always prevent the spread of COVID but packing Representatives into Representatives Hall clearly maximizes the possibility of the spread of disease and violates public health and CDC recommendations about large indoor gatherings without vaccine or mask mandates. We must remember the prolonged length of a House session is sufficient to insure that, if anyone brings COVID to the session, it will spread.

For all of these reasons, we believe any upcoming House session should again be held in Bedford or in a similar location where we can do our best to ensure the safety of members.

While no one can know what the COVID case count will be next January, we believe that the safest course, given the current state of COVID infection in NH, is to put off a veto session, or any other session, until January of 2022.

Signed,

Rep. Jeffrey Salloway, Ph.D. (D-Lee)
Rep. Jackie Chretien, Ph D (D-Manchester)
Rep. Jerry Knirk, MD (D-Freedom)
Rep. William Marsh, MD (D-Wolfeboro)
Rep. Gary Merchant, R.Ph. (D-Claremont)
Rep. Gary Woods, MD (D-Bow)