

Chicago Board of Education expected to vote on proposal that could mandate COVID vaccine for CPS employees

By [Diane Pathieu](#)

CHICAGO (WLS) -- The Chicago School Board is considering a rule that would give the head of Chicago Public Schools the authority to make getting the COVID-19 vaccine a condition for employment within CPS.

The school board is set to vote on the rule Wednesday. The rule would also allow CPS to call on employees to report to work in person.

The policy would give CPS CEO Janice Jackson the authority to possibly mandate the vaccine as a condition of employment. The Chicago Teachers Union is already pushing back, even though CTU spent months fighting for its members to receive vaccinations before returning to school.

"We believe there is an obligation to bargain with the union over things that are conditions of employment and we should expect the board to bargain with us about this," said CTU President Jesse Sharkey.

The policy also includes a provision that requires CPS employees to show proof they've received a vaccine.

"I suspect the board is trying to figure out who is vaccinated so they can force people back into school buildings, we have real worries about that," Sharkey said.

Regardless of motive, labor law experts say employers can legally mandate proof of vaccination.

"But, they need to make sure that proof doesn't have any information regarding disabilities or genetic information," said Margo Wolf O'Donnell, co-chair at Benesch Law Labor & Employment.

O'Donnell is working with several employers to craft vaccination policies. She said it is legal for companies to mandate vaccines as long as the policy is subject to certain accommodations.

"They could be disability related accommodations or accommodations for sincerely held religious beliefs, so it requires that employers and employees talk through these issues," she said.

The CPS policy does include accommodations.

Even if the school board passes it, the district said it will not enforce a vaccine mandate right away. CTU is urging the board to reject the proposal so the union and the district can go back to the bargaining table and craft a vaccine policy together.

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