



Brevard County Board of County Commissioners

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson
Way
Viera, FL 32940

Legislation Text

File #: 2555, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Board Consideration of Policy Requiring Certain First Responders to Be Vaccinated Against COVID-19

Fiscal Impact:

Indeterminate: Preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the community may have substantial positive fiscal impacts

Dept/Office:

Dist. 3

Requested Action:

Board Discussion, consideration, and adoption of the attached policy

Summary Explanation and Background:

The Board has gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure the protection of Brevard County residents, as well as its own employees, from COVID-19. In particular, it has appropriated millions of dollars to ensure that any vaccine that the County receives is distributed quickly and efficiently. Furthermore, it has offered certain first responder employees an incentive to receive the vaccine. However, it appears that there are some first responders that are insisting on risking the lives of the very Brevard County citizens is their duty to protect. These employees are refusing the COVID-19 vaccine, even when it is available to them and they are getting paid to receive it.

According to the Director of the Brevard County Health Department, Maria Stahl, "EMTs not being vaccinated could definitely result in transmission of the virus which could result in death of a resident." Allowing Brevard County citizens to die from the preventable transmission of the virus by a County employee is absolutely unacceptable.

The County Attorney's Office, in researching whether it would be legally viable to require vaccination as a condition of employment, found that "given the severity of the ongoing pandemic and the risk of serious illness and death from the COVID-19 virus as well as the exposure they have to the public to perform the essential duties of their job, first responders would likely fit the "direct threat" definition." This definition includes "a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the individual or others that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation."

This is particularly applicable to most first responders, as they are often called upon to assist the most at-risk population during times of medical crisis, including in long-term care facilities. Indeed, Ms. Stahl, the most senior State official in charge of managing the pandemic in the County, stated that "in Brevard 88% of deaths are to those over the age of 65 and 57% are those from long term care facilities. Brevard EMS responds very

frequently to that age group and to facilities.”

Under these circumstances, it is essentially a statistical certainty that, should these employees not be vaccinated, a Brevard County resident will needlessly die. To say that such a decision poses a “direct threat” to the public is an understatement; in any case, it is absolutely unacceptable for the Board to allow this to occur when it is within their authority to prevent it.

Clerk to the Board Instructions:

N/A