

Russell C. Carey
Executive Vice President for Planning and Policy
Brown University
Providence, R.I. 02912



August 26, 2022

Representative Patricia L. Morgan
Rhode Island General Assembly
House of Representatives, District 26
Via email to pmorgan14@cox.net

Dear Rep. Morgan:

I am writing on behalf of Brown University in response to your August 22 letter about Brown's COVID-19 vaccination requirement and approach to ensuring informed consent among community members.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have based our plans and decisions on the guidance of medical and public health experts for managing infectious diseases in a pandemic, including the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Rhode Island Department of Health, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the accomplished physician-scientists we are fortunate to have work in our own academic community at Brown.

When vaccines became widely available in 2021, Brown determined based on the best available scientific and medical guidance — and strong evidence of the safety and effectiveness of the authorized vaccines — that working toward near-universal vaccination would best protect individual health and promote positive community health for our campus, neighborhood and city. The Brown community's compliance with our vaccination requirement has proven essential to minimizing serious illness among students, faculty staff and in our ability to maintain in-person academic and administrative activities on campus.

As you know, the authorized vaccines were tested in large clinical trials with tens of thousands of people of different ages, races, ethnicities and underlying medical conditions to make sure they were safe, and vaccine monitoring systems have been used to watch for possible side effects. Public health and medical guidance has remained consistent and clear that the risk of COVID-19 infection itself, including for heart problems, greatly exceeds the risk of myocarditis or other side effects from vaccination. The requirement that students, faculty and staff remain up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations continues in 2022-23 to serve as a centerpiece of our successful efforts to protect health and safety on campus. For anyone with a significant underlying health concern, we have a clearly established and articulated exemption process that includes review by a panel of physicians.

The assertion that the University has failed to ensure a robust informed consent process is egregiously untrue. In addition to the information provided in print and digital form to the entire campus community, the University

provides vaccine information statements and information on risks and benefits to everyone who receives a COVID-19 or any other vaccine on campus. Participants also actively complete an informed consent agreement that attests to their full understanding of that information and provides their explicit consent to receive a vaccine.

In regard to the second- and third-hand claims outlined in your letter about an alleged reaction to the vaccine by a Brown student: To provide information about a specific student's medical condition without consent would violate federal privacy law. The University provides detailed information on vaccine risks and benefits without any violation of student privacy, and this will remain our approach moving forward.

Sincerely,

Russell C. Carey
Executive Vice President for Planning and Policy