

College of Charleston Amends COVID-19 Vaccination Policies After Concerns Raised by SC Attorney General

Proposed 'vaccine passport' plan shot down ...

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The [College of Charleston](#) is amending its policies regarding Covid-19 vaccinations for students this summer and fall after parents voiced concerns to the school – and to the office of South Carolina attorney general [Alan Wilson](#).

Documents obtained by this news outlet reveal that Wilson's office was inundated with inquiries regarding the school's policies – which would have required unvaccinated students to subject themselves to monthly Covid-19 testing or face unspecified sanctions.

Specifically, the school initially required any unvaccinated student who failed to fill out a university-mandated form attesting to their status "be placed in a monthly Covid-19 required testing protocol."

In a letter to CofC president [Andrew Hsu](#) dated yesterday (July 6, 2021), Wilson wrote that the school's policies "could be read to imply that an unvaccinated student (who) refuses to participate in a survey and monthly testing protocols may be subject to a reprimand, the harshness of which is unclear."

According to Wilson, state lawmakers have banned "any state institution from requiring Covid-19 vaccinations" – although some state agencies appear to be [flouting this ban](#).

"As state law makes clear, no state institution may mandate Covid-19 vaccinations or retaliate against those that choose not to receive a vaccination," Wilson wrote in his letter ([.pdf](#)). "I strongly urge the college to review and revise its proposed Covid-19 policy to ensure that it complies with state law. The college should clarify that while it may encourage vaccinations, there will be no reprimand, punishment or adverse consequence for any student (who) exercises their individual right not to receive a vaccination."

On Wednesday morning – less than 24 hours after receiving Wilson’s letter – the college announced it was updating its policies.

According to an email obtained by this news outlet from the parent of a CofC student, the school acknowledged that its policy requiring monthly testing resulted in “a few questions from students and families regarding requirements around vaccines and testing.”

That’s putting it charitably ...

I spoke to one parent this week who expressed concern that “the potential health risks of an experimental vaccine that has not been fully approved by the FDA outweigh the health benefits for a healthy 19-year-old at this time.” This parent indicated they were willing to keep an open mind as to the efficacy of the vaccine, but in the meantime the CofC vaccination policy “imposes a de-facto vaccine passport, which is banned in South Carolina.”

According to the school, no such passport is being required.

“As has always been the case, students are not required to be vaccinated in order to enroll or attend the College of Charleston or participate in any campus activities,” the email updating the school’s policies noted, although it added that school officials would continue to “strongly encourage all students to get vaccinated in order to assist in the College’s Covid-19 mitigation efforts.”

The key shift in policy contained in the missive?

According to the updated guidance, unvaccinated students will no longer be “required to participate in monthly testing protocols” – although “given the social nature and high density of a college campus, public health experts strongly encourage monthly testing for those individuals, at a minimum.”

The school said it would offer “voluntary weekly testing” in an effort to help “facilitate this effort.”

In a letter to Wilson accompanying the school’s updated guidance, president Hsu personally assured the attorney general that “no student will have any adverse consequence for making the personal choice not to be vaccinated.”

“I feel confident that with this message the college’s position is very clear,” Hsu wrote in his letter ([.pdf](#)).

It is clear ... *now*.

I suspect Wilson’s letter on this subject will receive significant airplay across South Carolina in the months to come as numerous state agencies – and political subdivisions of the state – grapple with the legality of their proposed vaccine policies. In the meantime, Covid-19 cases and related hospitalizations and deaths continues to [fall off the map](#) in the Palmetto State – while the number of vaccinated South Carolinians continues to climb.

According to the [latest data](#) from the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control ([SCDHEC](#)), 48.8 percent of South Carolinians over the age of 12 have received at least one vaccine dose while 43 percent have “completed” the vaccination process. These numbers lag behind the rest of the nation, though. Nationally, 64.4 percent of Americans over the age

of 12 have gotten at least one shot, while 55.6 percent are “fully vaccinated.”

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