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# MEMORANDUM

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Date: December 6, 2021

To: The Honorable Chair and Members  
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner   
Chief Deputy County Administrator

Re: **COVID-19 Update for the December 7, 2021 Board of Supervisors Meeting**

## **Pandemic Update**

Like the much of the rest of the State, Pima County is still in the midst of the current surge in COVID-19 cases. This November we have reported 15,649 cases compared to 13,933 cases in November of 2020. Cases have increased steadily significantly each week from a low of 1,690 on October 10 and peaking at 4,197 by the third week of November. Last week we reported 310 cases per 100,000; well in excess of a low point of 23 per 100,000 persons at the end of May 2021.

Diagnostic COVID-19 testing volume remains very high with about 35,000 tests performed each week in November with the exception of the Thanksgiving week. The rate of positivity rate continues to be elevated at 12 percent. This is compared to 2 percent positivity rate during the prior low point the last week of May.

COVID-19 positive individuals occupy approximately 401 hospital beds each day this week. Overall intensive care capacity continues to be extremely constrained across Pima County hovering at less than 3 percent (or 13 staffed ICU beds) adult ICU bed availability for a second month. As of yesterday, COVID-19 patients occupied 33 percent of all ICU beds in Pima County.

Omicron has emerged as the latest variant of concern to now be detected in the U.S. This particular COVID-19 variant has spread quickly since being identified in South Africa, and is now reported in sixteen states (including the neighboring states of California and Colorado), as well as Canada and Mexico. It is too early to tell whether this variant is substantially more transmissible or more morbid compared to the Alpha and Delta variants. We anticipate that vaccination (and in particular boosted vaccination), will likely prove protective against hospitalization and death, but the exact extent of that protection is still to be determined.

## **Schools**

Since July 20 of this year schools have reported 6,679 cases. This includes last week when schools reported 284 cases. Students still represent the overwhelming majority of these cases at 86.5 percent compared to teachers and staff at 13.5 percent. Previously, non-vaccine eligible children up to 11 years of age represent 49 percent (3,261 cases) of school

reported cases, while the 12 to 19-year age group make up 37 percent (2,481 cases) of school reported cases. (Attachment)

A total of 305 schools reported cases and are summarized by district in the Attachment. Individual district case counts reflect the underlying infection in those communities as well as the overall size of the district. More informative is examining the distribution of the 213 school outbreaks (as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of 2 or more epidemiologically linked cases not in the same household) and 119 separate classroom closures. Table 2 in the Attachment provides information on outbreaks and classroom closures as counts as well as rates, in an attempt to adjust for the size of the school districts. In general, districts that do not require masks had higher rates of outbreaks and classroom closures, while those with the largest enrollment have higher absolute numbers of cases reported.

Schools remain an area of special concern and attention. Since the beginning of this school year the Pima County Health Department has provided more than 127,495 COVID-19 test kits for supervised or proctored administration. This is above and beyond the considerable investment that individual school districts have made to expand their own testing infrastructure and capacity.

On November 18, the CDC first recommended COVID-19 vaccination for children 5 to 11 year. Since that time 16,768 vaccine doses have been delivered to children in this most vulnerable age-group. The Pima County Health Department in collaboration with partner schools and districts, has conducted 28 school vaccination events have delivered over 1,337 doses of the vaccine to 5 to 11-year old children in these low-barrier settings. Already across this community, more than 81,954 of school age individuals have now been vaccinated.

## **Vaccination**

Vaccination activities continue across the county, with the net impact of the various efforts being that 1,479,030 doses have been administered in Pima County. As of December 3, per the CDC, 71.2 percent of Pima County residents who are 12 years of age or older have been fully vaccinated (with two doses of Moderna/Pfizer or a single dose of Johnson & Johnson). Significantly, 61.8 percent of the *entire* population of Pima County has now been fully vaccinated.

Breakthrough infections have become more frequent with the spread of the Delta variant and the waning of immunity at about six months following completion of the initial vaccination series. In total, we have documented 10,903 breakthrough infections following complete vaccination. To put this in perspective, this is only 1.75 percent of the fully vaccinated population, although this increases every month individual reach the 6 month anniversary of their vaccination. Although these breakthrough cases are occurring, the usual course of the infection appears to more benign among those previously vaccinated. Because of that only 0.05 percent (322) of fully vaccinated individuals have required hospitalization, and only 0.01 percent (81) have died of COVID-19 related illness.

The Health Department correctly anticipated the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) subsequent action to the expansion of the Emergency Use Authorization of the Pfizer vaccine to cover all adults. Similar action for the Moderna vaccine is expected before the end of the year. As of last week, more than 71,692 Pima County residents had received a third vaccine dose.

### **COVID-19 Therapeutics**

A range of medications to treat and decrease the morbidity associated with COVID-19 infections has come into use. Some of these are repurposed agents that have already undergone the regular FDA approval process and can be procured by hospitals using their standard processes. Others like monoclonal antibody (MAB) therapy are approved for use under the FDA Emergency Use Authorization process and remain a federal asset that is allocated to the states for allocation to the locals.

Earlier this year the Pima County Health Department, Tucson Medical Center (TMC) and the Arizona Department of Health and Human Services conducted study that demonstrated the usefulness of MAB in preventing COVID-19 related hospitalization. Since that time the drug has become more widely available, however the severe staffing shortages have had the impact of the limiting the availability of drug in Pima County and across the state.

Our Health Department has been working with the federal Department of Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Emergency Preparedness to bring federal staffing assets to increase the availability of MAB in Pima County. In two weeks we expect to receive these federal staffing in order to support two additional MAB points of distribution to be operated in collaboration with TMC and Banner South. When fully in operation these MAB PODs will be able to provide subcutaneous MAB therapy 7 days per week and serve up to 40 patients per day.

### **Conclusion**

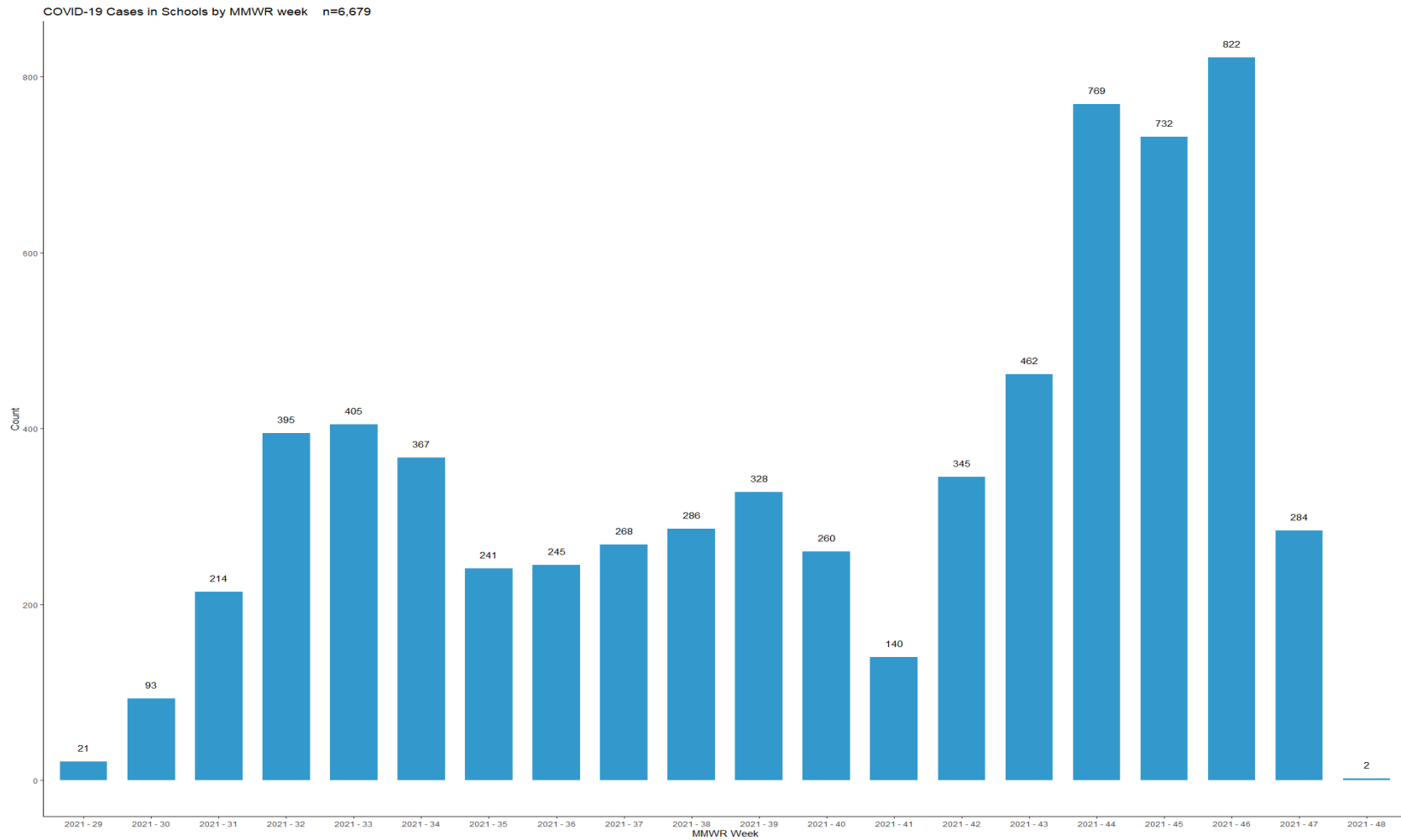
The current surge justifies Pima County's increasing investment in expanded testing capacity, vaccination and therapeutics. However, it is critical that each of us do our part to protect ourselves, our families and our community. This means that individuals need to mask effectively when in indoor public spaces; that sick individuals stay out of the work or school settings; that symptomatic individuals seek out rapid antigen testing; and most importantly, that all eligible persons undergo vaccination and booster if they have not yet done so.

JKL/dym

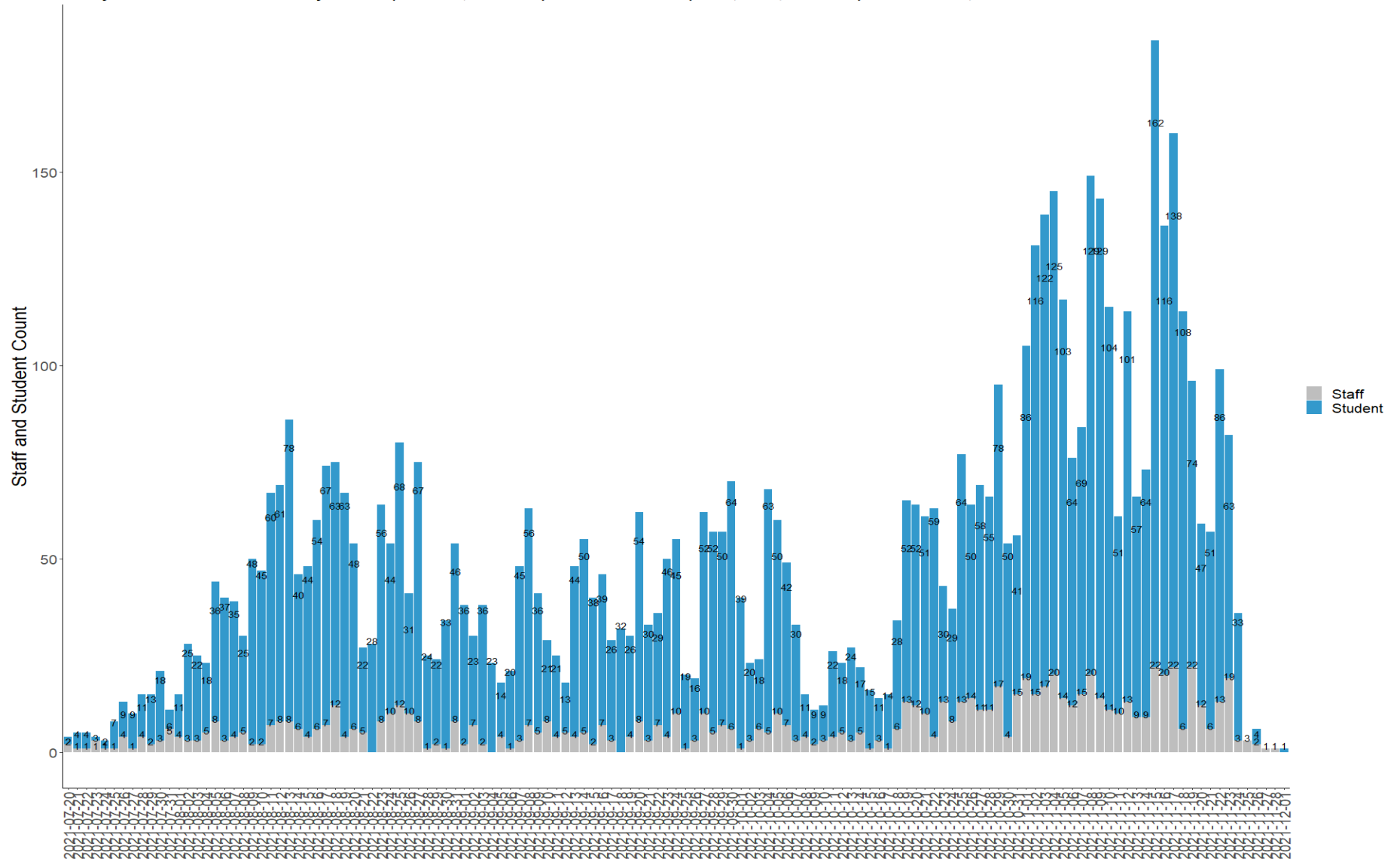
### **Attachment**

c: Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,  
Health and Community Services  
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works  
Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Health Department

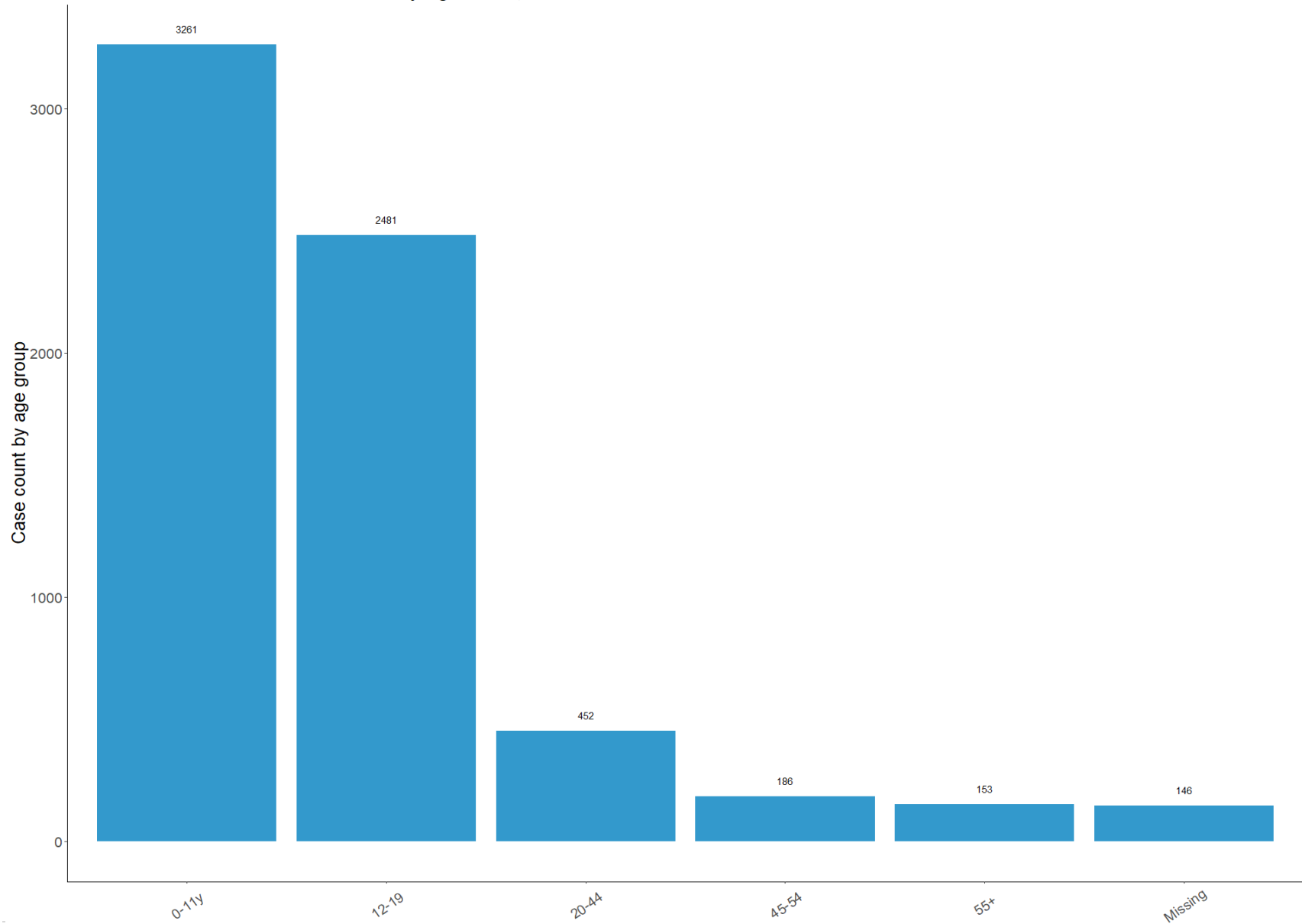
## COVID-19 in Pima County Schools



Daily COVID-19 Cases by Staff (n=905, 13.5%) and Student (n=5,774, 86.5%) Total n=6,679



Total COVID-19 Cases in Schools by age n=6,679



**Table 1: School case counts and incidence rates by district enrollment**

District	Case count	District enrollment	Case incidence rate
Ajo Unified District	22	452	4.87
Altar Valley Elementary District	20	639	3.13
Amphitheater Unified District	758	13658	5.55
Catalina Foothills Unified District	125	5427	2.3
Charter	809	N/A	N/A
Continental Elementary District	62	598	10.37
Flowing Wells Unified District	306	5649	5.42
Marana Unified District	656	12292	5.34
Other	7	1076	0.65
Private	258	N/A	N/A
Sahuarita Unified District	402	6499	6.19
Sunnyside Unified District	674	16113	4.18
Tanque Verde Unified District	111	2103	5.28
Tucson Unified District	1,643	45565	3.61
Vail Unified District	756	13392	5.65

**Table 2: School outbreak and classroom closures; counts and rates by district enrollment and school count by district**

District	District enrollment	School count by district	Outbreak count	Outbreak rate by district enrollment	Outbreak rate by school count by district	Closure count	Classroom closure rate by district enrollment	Classroom closure rate by district
Ajo Unified District	452	1	1	0.2	100.0	0	0	0.00
Altar Valley Elementary District	639	2	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.00
Amphitheater Unified District	13658	22	15	0.1	68.2	11	0.08	50.00
Catalina Foothills Unified District	5427	9	1	0	11.1	0	0	0.00
Continental Elementary District	598	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.00
Flowing Wells Unified District	5649	10	1	0	10.0	2	0.04	20.00
Marana Unified District	12292	19	23	0.2	121.1	17	0.14	89.47
Sahuarita Unified District	6499	9	14	0.2	155.6	5	0.08	55.56
Sunnyside Unified District	16113	21	18	0.1	85.7	6	0.04	28.57
Tanque Verde Unified District	2103	4	11	0.5	275.0	8	0.38	200.00
Tucson Unified District	45565	92	59	0.1	64.1	35	0.08	38.04
Vail Unified District	13392	20	34	0.3	170.0	20	0.15	100.00
Other	1076	5	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.00
Charter	N/A	95	27	N/A	28.4	10	N/A	10.53
Private	N/A	62	9	N/A	14.5	5	N/A	8.06



All COVID-19 Cases by Month and Year (ages 5-18 only)

