



## PFIZER QUIETLY FINANCED GROUPS LOBBYING FOR COVID VACCINE MANDATES

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### SOURCE: LEE FANG

Many of the supposedly independent consumer, medical and civil rights groups that created the appearance of broad support for the mandate received funding from one of the vaccines' manufacturers.



In the midst of a contentious debate about Chicago's plan to force employers to require their workers to take the COVID-19 vaccine, Karen Freeman-Wilson, president of the Chicago Urban League, appeared on television to dismiss complaints that such rules would disproportionately harm the Black community.

"The health and safety factor here far outweighs the concern about shutting people out or creating a barrier," Freeman-Wilson [said](#) on WTTW in August 2021.

Earlier that year, her group had received a \$100,000 grant from Pfizer, the manufacturer of one of the most commonly used COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, for a project to promote "vaccine safety and effectiveness." Although the Chicago Urban League is not normally shy about disclosing its corporate donors, the support from Pfizer is not listed in the ["partners"](#) section on its website. The drug industry funding likewise went unmentioned during the interview.

Pfizer's grant to the Chicago Urban League was one of many that Pfizer made to nonprofits and trade organizations. Pfizer doled out special funding to groups across the country that lobbied in favor of government policies to mandate the COVID-19 vaccine.

The extensive [list](#) of those with funding from the pharmaceutical giant includes consumer, doctor, and medical groups, as well as public health organizations and civil rights nonprofits. Many of those groups did not disclose the funding they received from Pfizer while they were advocating for policies that would force workers to get the vaccine.

There were several different and sometimes overlapping vaccine mandates in the country. At the federal level, President Joe Biden issued an executive order, which was ultimately struck down in court, mandating vaccinations at all employers with 100 workers or more. A number of state and

local governments forced public employees to get vaccinated and tried to force private-sector employers to follow suit. And many large employers required their employees to get vaccinated without any prodding from the government.

Critics of these employer mandates have noted that the majority of the proposed mandates, including Biden's, made no exception for individuals with natural immunity through prior infection. Proponents of the mandates [claimed](#) that the vaccines would prevent transmission of COVID-19, an argument that lacked sound scientific basis at the time and has further unraveled.

"You're not going to get COVID if you have these vaccinations," Biden falsely [claimed](#) in July 2021, as his administration and local governments were preparing mandate orders. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, similarly [stated](#) that vaccinated individuals "do not carry the virus."

But it wasn't just these unsupported claims by leading government officials that shaped the groundwork for COVID-19 mandates. A coalition of highly visible groups backed by Pfizer and the pharmaceutical industry provided much of the lobbying support for coercive vaccine policies. Here are the most important examples:

- The **National Consumers League**, a century-old corporate watchdog group, announced [support](#) for "government and employer mandates requiring [COVID-19] vaccination" in August 2021, during roughly the same period in which it accepted \$75,000 from Pfizer earmarked for "vaccine policy efforts." The organization is also led in part by Andrea LaRue, who serves as an NCL board member. LaRue's work as a [highly paid contract lobbyist](#) to Pfizer, focused on vaccine policy, is not disclosed by NCL's website.
- The **Immunization Partnership**, a Houston-based public health nonprofit, lobbied publicly against Texas legislation in 2021 designed to prevent vaccine passports and municipal vaccine mandates. The Immunization Partnership [claimed](#) that the bills "erode the vital role of our state's public health and medical experts in combating this pandemic." The partnership did not disclose that it received \$35,000 from Pfizer that year for "legislative advocacy."

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