

Dear Leaders and Decision Makers,

I listened to the entire hearing yesterday, all six hours. I hope all of the Connecticut representation did the same. If they did, then they would have heard the following: **3** people against providing mask choice to local municipalities, instead keeping masks in place. **4** individuals (including the 3 previously mentioned) who would like Governor Lamont's executive powers extended for an eighth time. And, I believe **161** others who plead that the masks become **parent's choice**, not local government's, in addition to not extending the Governor's executive power or the approval of executive order 9-1. And that's only those who had the opportunity to speak- I would assume if the trend continued, hundreds more would have had similar messages. Parents who want choice showed up and spoke for their children, they spoke for the urgency for the end of the mask mandate. If you were truly listening to your constituents and following the data, then it seems plain as day that you would **VOTE NO TO EXTENDING THE EXECUTIVE POWERS AND NO TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 9-1 AS IT STANDS TODAY**. Parents want choice, and we will not stop until we get it. Parents will not vote for anyone who continues to allow the government the power to decide if their child is masked. ,

I want to acknowledge all the parents who have been advocating so fiercely, willing to take the time to stand up for the children in Connecticut. It takes a lot of courage to do this and it also takes *time, a lot of it*. Recently, in an email to the CT Education Association, the sender pleaded with her constituents to help keep masks in place for 60 more days. She is entitled to this *personal* opinion, but what she is not entitled to is saying comments such as "They (meaning parents) have plenty of time and have focused their energies on this issue." I am a Business Owner, Stay at Home Mom to two young children, with another on the way. I can guarantee to you, I have very little time, as any parent will understand. Many of our state's representation may have received an email from me in the early morning hours, because that is my only free time. I have spoken to some of our representation on the phone while my children can be heard in the background asking for more goldfish. I do not have time, and the little time I do have, I spend doing this work, because it matters. Greatly. Our children's health and wellbeing are greatly at stake, and that is an issue worth fighting for, no matter how little time you or I have.

In that same email from the CT Education Association parents were labeled "opponents." This was also a word I took great offense at. We are not opponents, we are very concerned parents, and I hope you all can recognize that here today. Does speaking out on behalf of children's health make you a bad person? I should hope not. Much of this mask mandate has unfortunately become political. Most republicans today have told me they will vote "no" and most democrats have said they will vote "yes" (although some do want to vote no to the mask mandates, but as a grouping, this is impossible.) I am a registered democrat. I never hesitated checking that box when I turned 18. But, today, after a grueling 1.5 years of fighting for my children, I have to tell you, this is not the party I signed up for. This has not been a representation of what I thought being a democrat was. You have not been listening to your constituents, instead you have consistently chosen money over our children. On February 15th, if this vote continues the mask mandate for

schools, I will immediately be changing my registration to republican, as I know many others have pledged to do the same.

The mask mandate needs to be removed from the rest of the Executive Order 9-1. It is unfair and unjust to bundle them. It should be a parent's choice, not the Governor's. The mask mandate could be reinstated at anytime, without the legislature's sign off, which is greatly concerning. Giving the choice to local municipalities is just mitigating the issue away from Hartford onto the shoulders of Board of Education. Chaos will ensue. The executive order should absolutely not be extended.

So, to everyone who are still wavering on whether to end the mask mandate and instead make it a parent's choice, I ask you, what makes Connecticut so different from the rest of the US and world? 80% of the United States' youngest learners are not wearing masks. The vast majority of our country do not have a mask mandate in schools. Countries throughout Europe do not mask their children, and if they do, it's never below the age of 6 (usually 12, and even more likely, not at all). So I ask again, what makes Connecticut so different? Why do our state's health advisors not listen to the doctors, the data specialists, to the many studies that say [masks don't protect the way we've been told they do](#), but they are instead [severely harming our children's developmental and emotional health](#)?

My daughter has spent *her entire* education so far in a mask, surrounded by others in masks. What about the shy children who rely on facial expressions? What about the children who wear glasses, and cannot see due to fogging? What about the children who are soft spoken and cannot be heard through a mask? What about the children who simply say they cannot breathe, such as mine? What about the importance of seeing their teachers' mouths pronounce the words they are trying so desperately to learn to read and write? What do you say as the the mountain of learning disabilities continues to grow? These children need to have their childhood back, they need to see one another's faces, and they need to *breathe*. 6 hours in a mask is not healthy both physically or mentally for anyone, let alone for children. Most children wear cloth masks, which we know very well DO NOT WORK, as stated by The CDC themselves, as well as many studies. Why must our children be wearing masks that are absolutely not protecting them or anyone else, but instead causing them severe harm? Why must they continue to bear this burden, which is both unnecessary and so damaging? If someone wants to wear a mask for protection, they can, one-way masking is effective.

Children are attending birthday parties, going to play dates, attending dances (as we just recently had a mask-optional father-daughter dance here in Fairfield). What message are we sending to our children? Its confusing that they can eat out in a crowded restaurant with no mask in sight, and yet at lunch at school they are spaced apart. It is confusing that they can hug and interact playfully at parties, but at school they are told to distance. These guidelines do not make sense, and it is time for this to end for them. Let them stop living in a state of fear and confusion- let them be *kids*. Just as one variant, a very mild one at that, is ending, another one is already being

discussed, which begs the question and great concern, if it'll ever be enough to allow kids a regular childhood? Will you just reinstate the mask mandate as *you* see fit?

Every day that I pack a mask in my daughter's bag, I will email you. Every day that she says she can't breathe, I will email you. Every day that her mask comes home soaking wet, I will email you. Follow the science, follow the doctors, follow what any good human with a heart would do and get our children out of these masks. Our children deserve to smile and they deserve to learn fully and freely. To those who want to continue masking their children, I see you and I understand you just want you feel is best for you child to be safe, but I am asking for the same. Let the parents decide what our children need to be their very best self- to be wholly healthy and happy, because that is the oath we take to them.

VOTE NO TO ORDER 9-1. VOTE NO TO AN EXTENSION OF POWER. VOTE FOR PARENT'S CHOICE.

Thank you.

Amelia Fogarty, Fairfield CT