

To: Public Health Committee  
From: Carol Bogard, Wilton, CT  
Subject: Emergency powers and public health measures  
Date: Monday, February 7, 2022

First, I am sorry that members of the public health community have been subjected to so much hostility from the public they are dedicated to serve. Completely inappropriate and unhelpful.

The government has the right – indeed, the responsibility – to take extraordinary measures to protect public health and safety in an emergency, in this case, a health emergency. Heavens, we are legally required to wear seatbelts, which protect only the individual and not the general public. That law exists because, in aggregate, seatbelts save lives. Only the government has the purview to both identify and enact laws in the interests of the collective. Because a pandemic of a mutating virus moves quickly, giving the Governor the power to react with more speed than the legislative process is logical and necessary. Need to limit those emergency powers? OK. Perhaps tie it to a percentage increase/decrease in infection rate. Whatever.

Masks and vaccines and booster shots both reduce transmission, a prime directive, and save lives. Period.

Much has been made of mandates and restrictions in the school setting. This furor has been whipped up by a political party that assesses that furor to serve its political interests, not the best interests of the public, and it has been unleashed on school boards and local officials. Again, inappropriate and unhelpful. Public officials have a duty to the public writ large, not to an unhinged political ideology.

Schools are required to operate in a way that safeguards the health and safety of students and staff. Hopefully, covid vaccines will soon be mandatory. UNTIL THEN, REQUIRING MASKS (PREFERABLY N95s) IS A SIMPLE PRECAUTION THAT REDUCES TRANSMISSION – BOTH IN THE SCHOOL SETTING AND, CONSEQUENTLY, IN FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY.

Let's spotlight the fact that there are immunocompromised students and staff in the school community. Prioritizing the freedom of individuals to choose which safety measures they (don't) follow disregards the harm they then pose to those more vulnerable individuals. *If some people can't abide having to operate in the collective interest, those people are free to absent themselves and their children from the public school.*

I have been a public school teacher; the aunt of a severely disabled child for whom school attendance was a godsend; the mother of children whom I chose not to vaccinate – (don't worry, I'm over it and we're all vaxed) – AND whom I was prepared to homeschool if a vaccine waiver had not been granted. The only laws that don't make sense to me are the ones that prevent school officials and local elected officials from discharging their duties by taking reasonable steps to safeguard their communities.

Thank you for reading and for your service.