



Good afternoon Chairpersons Abrams and Steinberg and members of the committee. My name is Chris Majchrzak and I work as a paraprofessional in the East Lyme school District. I am also President of Local 1250, AFSCME Council 4 which represents paraprofessionals in East Lyme. I am here today to testify about the mask mandate in schools.

Throughout the pandemic, we have had to adjust and adapt to changing working conditions due to the Covid-19 virus. We've had to do difficult work virtually with students and have been back in-person as the Omicron variant has grown in our state. Classrooms are unique situations as students require 1 on 1 learning and it is difficult to socially distance. We believe that when it comes to masks in the classroom we should follow the science and not make it a partisan issue. For many paraprofessionals in elementary and preschool classrooms the students have not yet been vaccinated. This poses a risk to paraprofessionals who work closely with these students throughout the day. We also believe that there should be a mask mandate for districts through the month of February. This will allow us to get through colder temperatures until it is warm enough to open windows and improve ventilation. As Omicron begins to wane, we believe DPH should follow the science and trust that their decision will be for the safety of school staff and students in the classroom. This would allow them to revisit mask policies in district if a new variant should arrive and increase positivity rates.

I want to thank the committee for holding this informational forum and allowing voices to be heard regarding continuing the mask mandate in schools. We hope that we can make this a nonpartisan issue and all trust the science as it pertains to masks and Covid-19. Thank you for your time.