

To the respected Lawmakers of CT,

Thank you all for your continued service in this difficult time.

I respect the views of others and I support mask choice. All children even the unvaccinated children should be allowed mask choice.

My children are in preschool (age 4), 1st grade (age 7) and 3rd grade (age 9) and I live in Norwalk, CT. My eligible children are fully vaccinated and I respect that all children should have a choice in wearing a mask, even the unvaccinated.

I truly struggle to understand what CT citizens are gaining from a universal mask mandate.

Let the record reflect that CT lawmakers have evidence that cloth masks are ineffective at stopping COVID. Let the record reflect that CT lawmakers have evidence that prolonged mask wearing in children is harmful. Evidence is attached.

As a citizen of CT, we fully expect that any lawmaker in this state has attempted to educate him or herself on this paramount issue. **There is no excuse to blindly follow advice of any expert if there is any potential harm to a child.**

Mask Choice is about children. Mask choice is about protecting the children of Connecticut - who cannot protect themselves. It is not about a debate over individual or community rights or changing levels of infection rates. Two years is long enough and parents must have a choice for their children.

I have encouraged my children to protect the most vulnerable for two years. My children have proudly done so - over 30 scary covid tests, daily mask battles, daily tantrums over not being heard / seen in school, 2 vaccine shots each and we have separated them from their grandparents. It is a childhood laced with daily fear and isolation. My youngest child, despite 3 years of Norwalk speech services, now talks out of the side of her mouth to mimic the muffled sounds she hears.

The children of CT cannot go one like this. Two years is a significant amount of time for any child. Childhood is short. Childhood is vulnerable. Childhood in CT needs our protection now.

The COVID death rate in children is so low, it rounds to 0%. Children do not need protection from COVID. If the universal mask mandate is for protecting adults - children can no longer protect adults.

Children protecting adults is a rare occurrence in history. Children are harmed when they are responsible for protecting adults. They are not capable of protecting adults - they are completely dependent human beings. Completely dependent upon you. Children should only protect adults as a last resort. In a global pandemic, I could understand this for a short period in time. That period is long, long over.

And now we need to protect children. Children cannot continue to go to school, before / after care and activities in a mask. This can be 8-9 hours a day. A human being, let alone a child, cannot go most of a day without seeing or sharing a human face. Adults are going to bars, restaurants, work and parties all without masks. Children all over this country are going to school without a mask. I do not understand how children of CT have been forgotten!

I am urging CT to give families a choice over masking their children.

While I think we have all been doing our best, I truly believe universally mandating mask wearing in children will reflect as one of our poorest decisions during the pandemic in the United States. Shame on the CDC for not following the WHO guidelines- guidelines that did protect children. Shame on us all for letting our own fear burden our children.

Again, universal mask mandates may have been necessary at a point in time which has long gone. We now know how a person protects themselves - N95 masks, vaccines, seeking treatments, distance etc. CT now knows better and CT must do better by our children.

Citizens of CT were told that if we did our part early in the pandemic, we would be better off! We are not! We are one of the last states with a universal mask mandate for children - despite being one of the smallest states in the country with one of the highest vaccination rates. I truly do not understand a single argument left to a universal mask mandate in children.

What is the primary argument to continue a universal mask mandate in children?

1. Is it because CT health experts are recommending it?

First and foremost, the citizens of CT have not elected a doctor to lead us. We have elected Governor Lamont to lead and protect the people of this state. We expect that lawmakers do not take recommendations blindly. Like all of us, health professionals' recommendations are biased. Health professionals are SEEING the worse and FEELING the worse and are being MEASURED on covid rates. I am not blaming them for their position - I understand it. I do not understand how a leader would blindly follow it. I am also not saying that their recommendation should be ignored - I am saying it should be considered alongside the research studies, mental health studies and along other health experts around the world who are calling for a lift to a universal mask mandate or who have never recommended one at all.

Let the record reflect that the CDC's landmark study for masking children has been thoroughly dismantled. Let the record also reflect that Yale's website states cloth masks cannot be worn. Let the record reflect that there are studies that have proven negative side effects on developing children (see attached).

I am not saying that opening schools without a mask mandate is not scary - I am saying it is time to be BRAVE and time to be UNCOMFORTABLE. We KNOW this community will be okay if children are not in masks. We need to move in the direction away from fear and into normalcy -- for OUR CHILDREN and for the adults.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,  
Christine Cataldo

## Research Studies

1. *Masking Emotions: Face Masks Impair How We Read Emotions*  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8185341/>
2. *Is a Mask That Covers the Mouth and Nose Free from Undesirable Side Effects in Everyday Use and Free of Potential Hazards?*  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8072811/>
3. *Are the kids really alright? Impact of COVID-19 on mental health in a majority Black American sample of schoolchildren*  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8424257/>

## Peer-Reviewed References

1. Grundmann, F., Epstude, K., Scheibe, S. (2021). *Face masks reduce emotion-recognition accuracy and perceived closeness*. PLoS ONE 16(4): e0249792. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249792>
2. Vainshelboim, B. (2021). *Facemasks in the COVID- 19 era: A health hypothesis*. Medical Hypotheses. 146:110411. doi:10.1016/j.mehy.2020.110411. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7680614/>

## Other support

1. <https://ehs.yale.edu/mask-guidance>
2. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2021/12/mask-guidelines-cdc-walensky/621035/>
3. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/masks-children-parenting-schools-mandates-covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-biden-administration-cdc-11628432716>
4. <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/10/commentary-what-can-masks-do-part-1-science-behind-covid-19-protection>
5. <https://time.com/6145291/end-mandatory-masks-schools/>