

Ms. Bye

I am the mother of two children, 6 and 3. My three year old currently attends daycare in Connecticut and is directly impacted on a daily basis by mandates YOU put in place. When she was just two and a half years old, she was moved up to the 3s classroom in her daycare, well ahead of her friends because she was doing so well and becoming bored in her toddler class.

The first day we picked her up from her new class, she had on a mask. I was incredibly disappointed to learn that my program didn't advise me, ahead of my agreeing to transition her to 3s, that she would be forcibly masked all day regardless of the fact that she was not yet 3. I had concerns about her speech development and certainly knew this would not help. I gave it a week, to see if I could get comfortable with it: I could not, so I asked to have her moved back with her friends.

The day she returned to her toddler class, the program had shifted her friends from the toddler room up to the 3s class. So now, we had a choice, allow her to stay behind without her peers, free of a mask in the room literally next door, with only a half wall separating the two classes, or send her over the wall and wear a mask from 8:15 am to 5:45 pm EVERY DAY. As you mandate this for toddlers and teachers, can you honestly say you have EVER done that yourself? We kept her back a few more weeks, hoping and praying that as the virus rates came down in our area, that maybe you would come to your senses and allow the children, the LEAST AT RISK, to be free of the masks. Even when rates in the entire state were at 2-3% (and much lower in Fairfield County) - you would not budge. We could not keep her back any longer and let her move on to the 3s.

Since being forcibly masked in class, her speech progression has declined dramatically. Her pediatrician noted the marked decline in her speech and recommended I seek further assistance. I've been in touch with our town's early childhood center to have her evaluated and while I was hopeful she'd get some help, the support has been underwhelming, to say the least, because THEY are overwhelmed with children just like mine. Our town's speech budget sky rocketed \$2.9MM this year. YOU are doing this to the children of this state.

To say that masking does anything at all to prevent the spread of COVID in the daycare population would be laughable if it weren't so sad and shows you've not actually seen how a daycare and masked children operate. The building itself has no walls that are higher than an adult's waist, so rooms where no children are masked are sharing air with children who are. In the masked classrooms, children wear the masks improperly, under their noses and chins. Masks come off for breakfast, where they all sit together. Masks come off for lunch, where they all sit together, Masks come off for nap, where they all sleep next to each other for two hours. Masks come off at afternoon snack where they all sit together. WHAT GOOD IS THIS DOING?! The answer; it's doing nothing, and it's all for show. To show you're doing *something*. To say that the children don't mind the masks, that they are resilient, is acknowledging that harm is being done

to them. They are good little boys and girls who are doing what the trusted adults in their life are asking. Most of those adults are not the ones putting them to bed at night, hearing the tears and the anxiety, tending to the sores on their faces, or fighting to get *any* help to catch up their speech. The benefits here do not outweigh the risks.

In two years, 7 children in the entire state have died *with* covid (the youngest of these children was smothered in a co-sleeping incident, but happened to have tested positive for COVID post mortem). That is a 99.99% survival rate among children who have *caught* COVID (higher if you consider the entire pediatric population). They are not at risk, they do not spread COVID the way adults do. Both of my children have been exposed at school numerous times (with poor mask usage) at school and have never contracted COVID from those contacts. They go EVERYWHERE else without a mask, around other children and adults who are unmasked - exposed, never contracted. The ONLY place they wear masks, the one place want them to LOVE going to? School.

When they did catch COVID, it was at home from an older family member, not from another small child. They both had hand foot and mouth just a few weeks earlier (which was contracted at daycare), and I will tell you, if I had to choose which virus took a harder toll on our family, hands down it was hand foot and mouth disease. COVID was a non event here - except for the fact that my 6 year old, who never had one single symptom, panicked and burst into tears when he found out he was positive. He thought it was a death sentence - "But mommy, I'M NOT SICK?!?!". This is what all of these ineffective mitigation strategies are doing to our children. Terrifying them and damaging their psychological, emotional and educational development. And to what end? An entire generation destroyed, for the .001%?

Ma'am, the only thing that poses a risk to these children, is your ego.

Regards

Christy Weltens