

Please do not extend the emergency powers or codify the emergency orders. The emergency is over. Covid-19 is here to stay. It has become endemic to our lives and, like the flu or the common cold we will need to learn to live with it. With respect to masks, children, who are the least at risk for harm from covid-19 have suffered the most. They are now completing their second year of missing out on being easily heard, being able to smile, frown and to otherwise communicate nonverbally, breathing freely while playing sports among many other childhood experiences. It is unrefuted that, as a result, they have missed out on reaching appropriate social and emotional learning milestones. High School administrators report that students are two years behind developmentally. Is that a coincidence? Parents (along with their children's physicians) can determine if children should continue to wear masks. It is time to lift the mandate. Any student or teacher that does not feel safe can continue to wear a mask.

Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania are lifting their mask mandates. Some New York counties have lifted theirs as well. Florida and Texas, who lifted all restrictions early and has not mandated masks all year are reporting lower cases than many states with mandates. Connecticut did such a great job in the early days of the pandemic by loosening restrictions. It is time to let children be children and to drop the school mask mandates.

Thank you.

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