

February 7th, 2022

Dear State Legislators,

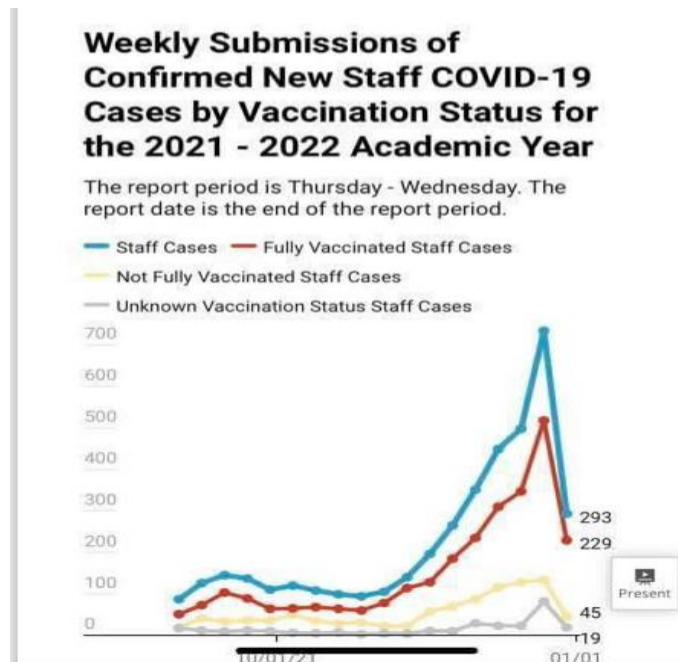
I am a school psychologist with over ten years of experience working in Connecticut's schools. COVID-19 has drastically impacted the climate of schools and the wellbeing of students and teachers alike. With the rise of a more transmissible strain of the virus such as Omicron, it is undeniable that COVID can be spread in schools. However, there is ample data to demonstrate that Omicron symptoms are mild for most, especially children and regardless of vaccination status. What is having a much more profound impact in schools are the mandates enforced by Governor Lamont under Executive Order 13G.

Students, who again are at very little risk for serious COVID symptoms, are going on two full school years of wearing masks every day, all day long, as well as two years of Plexiglas, six feet apart signs, and reminders of the virus all around them where they learn. I have witnessed firsthand as a school psychologist that these rules and restrictions have impacted school attendance, school achievement, and the social-emotional wellbeing of students. These impacts include school avoidance, depression, suicidality, anxious behaviors in children, cases of abuse/neglect, and special education referrals, especially for preschool aged students who have never known a world without COVID fear and rules. I am afraid if these mandates become permanent, we are only scratching the surface of the effects they will have on children for years to come.

If the mandates were effective at mitigating COVID cases, they might be worth the negative consequences. However, there are at least 41 separate studies that show that cloth face masks are ineffective at blocking the virus, and some of these studies also concluded that mask wearing had negative health outcomes. It is therefore unacceptable that children, as young as age two, have been forced to wear them all day long in schools and daycare settings for going on two full school years. (a summary of these studies can be found on <http://archive.ph/6wGds>).

Another part of the executive order is the vaccine mandate for school workers. The negative effects this mandate has had include discrimination, stigmatization, and healthy school employees using their free time and money not to rest, recover, and engage in much needed self-care, but to search for COVID testing, hope their results will come in on time, and hope they don't have to pay out of pocket for testing. I am a new mother who spends hours away from my infant son on weekends just to prove I am healthy enough to report to work, despite CDC and WHO advising against asymptomatic testing. I personally know several, also healthy, teachers who spent upwards of six hours waiting in line for tests during the testing shortage at the holidays. Teachers have plenty on their plates without needing the additional stress this mandate has placed on them. Again, these are healthy people. Many of these teachers have exemptions. In my case, I am a nursing mother and nursing mothers are not allowed to be part of the current clinical trials for the vaccines.

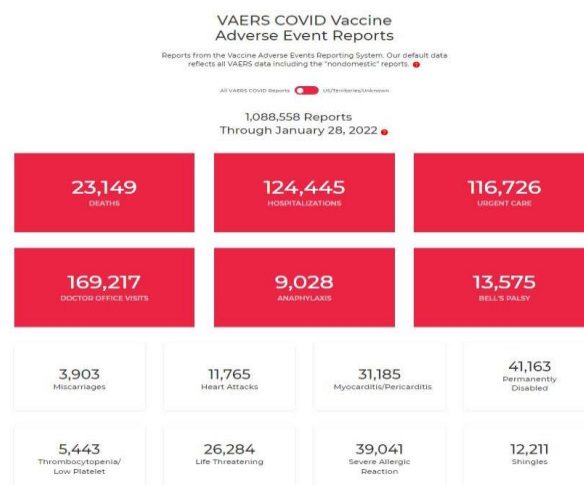
It should go without saying that mandating a vaccine that is still undergoing clinical trials is wrong and possibly dangerous. There is ample data that shows the vaccine is not effective at slowing the spread of the virus. The DPH releases weekly data that shows that vaccinated school workers comprise a disproportionate majority of COVID cases in schools, despite unvaccinated staff being required to test weekly under the executive order, especially during the Omicron surge when vaccinated individuals were the cause for the spike:



(source: <http://www.data.ct.gov>)

Speaking personally, again, my infant son caught COVID from his fully vaccinated, boosted, masked, daycare worker. Pfizer and the CDC both acknowledge at this point that the vaccine does not reduce transmission. So once again, when weighing the costs verse benefits of this mandate, it just isn't necessary nor helpful.

To name another data source, a November 2021 data analysis of 145 countries by Kyle Beattie of University of Alberta found that the vaccine rate actually correlated with higher COVID cases and death (read the abstract at <http://www.researchgate.net/public>). Additionally, VAERS data demonstrates that there are ongoing reports of deaths, injury and adverse reactions to the vaccine. To date there have been reported 23,149 deaths directly related to the vaccine. This is more than double the number of deaths associated with all other vaccines combined since the year 1990.



(source: <http://openvaers.com/covid-data>)

We should not need to make a case against mass vaccination and mask wearing. Rather, there should be data that overwhelmingly supports it- and the Governor has failed to demonstrate that proof. We all want to return to as much normalcy as possible. However, we need to apply common sense to the practices we are using to keep ourselves healthy, not use irrational fear to apply nonsensical practices that promise normalcy but don't actually work. We need to use data to make decisions. And we need to allow people of this state the ability to again make their own health decisions. End the mandates, end the discrimination, and end the spread of COVID fear and government overreach in the so-called name of "protection."

Respectfully,

Jessica McDonnell

CT Certified School Psychologist