

Why We Support Mask Choice

Dear Members of the CT General Assembly:

We are writing to request that you VOTE NO on the upcoming vote being taken to extend all and any of the COVID emergency executive orders previously issued by Governor Ned Lamont.

As parents to three children under seven years old, while living through these trying times we have experienced many views on the topic of masking. Like many, we were always pro mask from the start and still believe that there is an appropriate time and place when wearing a medical or higher grade mask (not a cloth mask) the correct way can aid in the prevention of spread. We believed that masks in school were necessary when children went back for the 2020/2021 school year. We also feared sending our children back into what felt like the lion's den, but once we became comfortable with the day-to-day it indeed became the new normal. It's like that, how we as people can adapt to new conditions if necessary, but we have to remember that adapting to only one way is not really adapting at all. Adapting as conditions change is what makes us resilient and keeps us moving forward.

As far as we know, we haven't had COVID in our immediate family, but we would still choose to unmask our children in school. We are not dealing with the same COVID of 2019/20. No one can argue with the fact that we have come a long way with prevention, treatments and knowledge. From day one, doctors have told us that the virus will weaken over time and here we are with Omicron. The time has come for us to adapt yet again and prioritize our children's education and social wellbeing. The decision whether to mask a child in school should be a choice made by each family rather than the government. The very core of a child's education, especially at the preschool and elementary level, is about social connection which comes from seeing the faces of teachers and other students around them. How can we expect our teachers to help children with speech through a mask? And how can we expect our children to learn and develop properly, and to achieve their full potential, after years of forced mask wearing in school?

Let's make the choice to adapt again and put our children first.

Sincerely,

Joseph and Irina Leone (Weston, CT)