

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, thank you for listening to what I and many of your other constituents have to say on this important topic.

My wife Lisa and I have a 3 year old son, and like many kids he goes to daycare 5 days a week. Also like most Connecticut families, my wife and I rely on both of our full-time incomes to pay the bills – we can't afford to just keep our kids home for 2 years. Jacob, along with the rest of our family had COVID-19 in early 2020, and like most kids, his symptoms were extremely mild, even at age 2. Since this pandemic started he has been around children and caregivers throughout the day that have been forced by the Office of Early Childhood Education to wear masks all day long.

Because of this state's misguided policy, my now 3 ½ year old, who I would remind you has natural immunity, has spent literally over half his life surrounded by people wearing masks, and a quarter of it being forced to wear one himself, during some of his most formative years for his emotional and social development. Likewise, my 5-month-old son spends the majority of his day around other children and caregivers without being able to see their faces. Can anyone seriously argue this is healthy, or has no effect? I have gone into daycare with a mask on, and my own son doesn't even recognize me – but the minute I take off the mask he smiles and laughs. So I can tell you for a fact, children need to see faces, it's not just an inconvenience to put a mask over them all day – there are real harms being done to our kids. Over 90% of communication is non-verbal, much of it primarily through facial expressions. There is a reason almost no other country in the world chose to mask kids anywhere near as young as we did.

To further highlight the absurdity of continuing the mask policy, I'd like to invite you to look at the CT Department of Health's publicly available data at <http://tinyurl.com/ctcoviddata>. If you look there, you'll see that out of over 10,000 deaths attributed to COVID in the state of Connecticut, only 2 have been under the age of 10. An additional 5 have been between 10 and 19 years old. Yes, every death is tragic, but the idea that we'd going to continue to impose these draconian mask policies on our children, when they face almost no risk from COVID, is simply shameful. It's the policy of frightened adults, who have had every opportunity to get vaccinated if they wish to do so including boosters, yet they still demand our youngest children sacrifice for their illusion of a marginal improvement in their own safety.

Don't the vaccines work to prevent hospitalizations and death? I believe they do and I think everyone here – certainly everyone advocating for continuing masking our children – would agree that they do. Then why do our children need to wear masks to protect the VACCINATED adults from catching COVID? This doesn't even account for the enormous number of residents – both children and adults – that have natural immunity. The idea that every child needs to suffer even a minute longer for the benefit of these frightened ideologues is frankly, outrageous at this point.

As DPH commissioner Juthani stated, if these executive orders are signed into law, this will become a local decision, which means that tens of possibly hundreds of thousands of our children will continue to be required to be masked throughout their day until who knows when. As the commissioner also stated, it is likely that COVID cases could rise in the future with winter months. If you vote yes to put these executive orders into law, the governor and DPH could decide at any time, without legislative input, to issue another statewide mask mandate on our children. That's just wrong. The people of Connecticut, through their elected representatives, deserve a say in any such future decisions. After over two years of learning about this virus, we hopefully can recognize in hindsight what most of us now know about lockdowns and remote learning - that masks are harmful for children and the benefits do not outweigh the enormous harms being done to our children. Please vote no, and do not extend these executive orders. Let them expire on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for your time.