

## **Testimony for the Public Health Committee's Informational Hearing on the Continuation of Emergency Declarations and Limited Executive Orders**

Dear members of the Public Health Committee:

A decision to remove the mask mandate for schools is premature. Although Connecticut's Covid positivity rate has decreased dramatically from its recent peak, it is still well above the much lower rates we had this Fall. Our youngest children are still not eligible for the Covid vaccine, some of whom are attending preschool in public school settings. Only 30% of grade school children are fully vaccinated!

Despite the arguments of a vocal and well-funded group of anti-maskers, it is too soon to remove the mask mandate. There is already a shortage of substitute teachers in Connecticut. Other states have had to resort to drastic measures to handle teacher shortages due to Covid. We don't want to have to do that.

Although it is tempting to relax restrictions as the Covid pandemic seems to lessen, there is too great a risk of halting, or even reversing, the progress we have made fighting this virus. We must continue the mask mandate for schools.

Thank you,

Nancy Ellman  
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