

Testimony in SUPPORT of Continuation of Emergency Declarations & Limited Executive Orders - February 8, 2022

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Dougherty-Abrams and Rep. Steinberg, Vice-Chairs Sen. Anwar, Sen. Kushner, and Rep. Gilchrest, and Ranking Members Sen. Hwang, Sen. Somers, and Rep. Petit,

Please vote to continue the Governor's executive orders and continue mask mandates statewide. We are still in a pandemic, and the Omicron variant has mutated to a new variant which is now in Fairfield county.

We definitely **MUST KEEP** mask mandates for ALL indoor gatherings which includes schools, doctor offices, healthcare facilities, hospitals, nursing homes, the Capitol and LOB, prisons, grocery stores, all businesses open to the public, and restaurants during preparation and serving of food, etc. If we don't have mask mandates for the entire state and let 169 towns and cities decide on masks mandates, there will be chaos at the Town Council and Board of Education meetings. Teachers, children and our communities must be protected.

Please don't listen to the noise of those who want to just stop all the precautions.

Please see this article from NY Times: "Polio, Chickenpox, Measles... Covid-19? The Case for Vaccine Mandates in Schools" Feb. 7, 2022.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/07/opinion/covid-vaccine-mandate-school-kids.html?smid=fb-share&fbclid=IwAR2aZNGXLYVjzWXHNFWR8-x2v9k7T0GXRSSaiU63KoVFb9utE-MCdmJveEI>

If we do not continue with mask mandates in all indoor settings, we will be constantly cycling between periods of viral infections, hospitalizations and deaths from this coronavirus pandemic. In addition, CT is now at 77% totally vaccinated. This needs to increase to 90-95% totally vaccinated to reach herd immunity. Then and only then should mask mandates be removed.

By removing mask mandates now, we are setting the stage for yet another surge from the new variants that can emerge. We are setting

the stage for our hospitals to become overwhelmed and won't be able to treat the normal hospitalizations for heart attacks, strokes, broken bones, elective surgeries, and more.

Many of those who won't wear masks are also those who won't get vaccinated. So we won't know if we are safe in any indoor setting unless everyone wears masks until everyone gets vaccinated.

We know that we all need layers of protection from this respiratory coronavirus pandemic: social distance, good masks worn correctly over mouth and nose (KN95 & N95), and vaccination. All children should be vaccinated against Covid in order to go to school just as they do for other vaccines, and all adults should be vaccinated as well or submit to twice or more weekly testing to go to work.

Those who say democracy is about choice and want to end mask mandates are sorely misguided. Although in our democracy we have Freedom of Speech, we do not have the right to shout "FIRE" in a movie theater. It is against the law when there is no fire. The same must apply to wearing masks. Those who won't wear masks are infringing on my civil rights and my health. This is not acceptable.

Just recall the years when people were severely injured or died in car accidents when they were thrown through the windshield. All were required to wear seat belts by law. At first many protested and were pulled over and given tickets from police officers. Today more people survive car accidents and mostly everyone wears seat belts.

Please be strong and protect those citizens in CT who don't want to protect themselves or others in their community. Continue and extend the Governor's executive orders and enforce statewide mask mandates in ALL indoor settings.

Thank you. Stay safe and well.

Respectfully,
Paula Bacolini
Glastonbury, CT