

Testimony
In Support of Codifying EO 9-1

My name is Dr. Robert Dudley and I am the Immediate Past President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and a general pediatrician and school medical advisor in New Britain. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of codifying EO 9-1, which allows the State Departments of Public Health and Education to mandate/regulate mask wearing in schools.

Mask wearing is one of the pillars of mitigation strategies (with vaccination, social distancing, and environmental modifications) used to keep schools safe for in-person learning during the current pandemic. Masking is strongly backed for areas of high COVID transmission by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC. Though COVID transmission is decreasing, most of Connecticut is still considered to be at high risk, and death rates and hospitalizations remain elevated. Children under 5 yo are not yet able to get the vaccine, and significant percentages of school age children remain unvaccinated. Now is not the time dial back on our vigilance or dedication to safety measures.

Throughout the pandemic local Boards of Education and Departments of Health have looked to DPH and CSDE for leadership and guidance. This has been an extraordinary example of our government working, across domains, for the good of children and staff. EO 9-1 allows that coordination to continue as we hopefully wind things down: the Commissioner of Public Health can rescind mandatory masking in an organized fashion when transmission rates fall to safer levels. If another, more dangerous, variant were to appear she is also best positioned to put safety measures back in place quickly.

The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly backs codifying EO 9-1. Masks have been a key mitigation tool allowing the safe return of children to school during the pandemic. Relaxing those strategies in a coordinated way led by the Department of Public Health and the Department of Education will allow school districts across the state to move forward in the safest way possible. Thank you.