

Good afternoon – my name is Ryan Sullivan and I live in New Canaan. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about the existing Executive Orders; I would like to speak specifically to the topic of Mask Mandates for Connecticut schools.

I am a parent to two children, one in kindergarten and one in pre-school, both of whom had to wear masks to school for the last two years while in session. My 6-year-old son Grayson asked me to write to the governor, which I have done, and now I am speaking in this forum to express our frustration. My 6-year-old recognizes what many in the Connecticut government do not – approaching year three of the pandemic, it is time to drop the restrictions that we put on our children for good. The Omicron variant emphasizes the fallacies that we embrace in the name of safety; that if we distance, mask, and vaccinate, the general population will not get COVID. This is now clearly untrue – many, many more cases in the last 90 days, despite these supposed safeguards.

I ask that the choice to have children wear masks in school reside with the parents, not with the Department of Public Health nor Governor of our state. No one knows better how to manage the risks that face their children than parents, certainly not government officials in Hartford. The Executive Order is a dramatic over-reach into the lives of minors, and it is crushing as a parent to watch my children lose out on the joy that should come with their first years in school due to universal masking. They suffer by not seeing the faces of their friends and teachers, and their growth stunted by Covid mitigation practices that are now clearly an ineffective farce. The benefit of universal masking is very little, and the cost to my family is too high to bear. If others wish to keep their kids in masks, let that be their prerogative.

Do not codify these mandates in the Executive Order into law. Neither the Governor nor the DPH should have the power to mandate a face covering on my child. Subsequent contingencies, guidelines or other ways to enforce masking from the State are intolerable. The social, developmental and emotional damage done due to these ineffective masks is not being acknowledged at the State level, but the parents can see the costs. Please leave the choice with them.

I am politically independent, with no party affiliation, and frequently through my voting history I have voted Democrat in local and national elections. The fact that these individual rights for parents and their children has become a partisan issue, with government controls championed by state Democrats is a travesty. I will not be voting for Democrats who look to make universal masking a law, and will be actively working to put Republicans in their seats come November.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Ryan Sullivan