

Dear General Assembly Members,

I am a father of two daughters: a first-grader (6) and a preschooler (3) who have been in masks ever since they started school and have never seen the full faces of their teacher or classmates. I am writing to ask you to vote No on the extension of the governor's statewide school mask mandate (Executive Order 13A).

I could present emotional pleas on behalf of my children and others. But I know you have received many such messages.

Instead, as a lawyer who prefers logic, I would like to briefly present the factors at issue and suggest that the balance of the equities for each weighs strongly in favor of ending the mask mandate.

- Risk. The risk to children of serious illness or death from Covid-19 is statistically near zero. Mask proponents argue that children should wear masks to protect the at-risk population: those over 65 and/or those with serious comorbidities. Never in history have we made our children play this role for others, at their own detriment, and for such a prolonged period of time. Individuals who are at high risk must take their own prevention measures, including vaccination if they choose. They have had adequate time to do so. Children cannot bear the burden any longer for such individuals, and children meanwhile have proven to be at extremely low risk to themselves.
- Transmission. In spite of all public policy measures taken to date – masks, social distancing, quarantines, mass vaccination – the virus has spread to nearly every corner of the globe. In spite of near-universal mask wearing and high levels of vaccination, we have nearly all gotten Covid. Fortunately, the strains have become weaker over time. But it is futile to believe we can stave off the virus with masks at this point, especially given its already wide circulation.
- Precautionary Principle. Masks may have seemed sensible as a precautionary measure two years ago when we thought we could contain or stamp out the virus, and when we had no other proven tools to fight it. Two years later, we have many tools at our disposal (vaccines, antivirals, antibodies) and we have come to accept that the virus has circulated widely and is here to stay.
- Omicron & Flu. The virus we are battling now has proven to pose a significantly decreased danger to our population. In fact, scientists have rated its morbidity risk to be lower than many seasonal flu viruses. Accordingly, we should be relaxing our mitigation strategies. Instead, we seem to react to each wave of cases in the same manner as we did in 2020. Yet, we don't mask our children every year for the entire flu season, or indeed any part of it. Omicron has paved the way to a normalized, flu-like situation. We know how to handle this, as we do every year.

- Mortality & Cases. After two years, the number of Covid-related child deaths (ages 0-18) in the state of Connecticut remains in the single digits. These mortality statistics tell the story we need to be focused on. Rather than focus on waves of positive cases, and the corresponding paranoia our media have helped fuel, we should maintain our focus squarely on morbidity data. After all of the case waves and mutations we have seen, there are still only **five (5)** recorded deaths due to Covid-19 among children in the State of Connecticut.
- Efficacy. Studies released by the CDC and WHO, in May 2020 and November 2019, respectively, show that masks are ineffective at reducing the spread of airborne viruses in general and specifically coronaviruses. The very small percentage of the tiny particles such masks block make them a poor tool. The answer, however, is not to use N95 or KN95 masks, which perform only marginally better, as these masks would pose even greater breathing and other issues for our children, who are forced to wear them for 8 hours a day. Rather, we must accept the reality that the fraction of airborne particles blocked by any mask makes them largely ineffective.
- Child Development. On their own, the factors above weigh in favor of ending mask mandates. However, the most important factor, which has been largely ignored for the last two years, is the extraordinary effects that masking has had on our children's mental, emotional and social development. We have assumed for too long that wearing a mask was a minimal inconvenience for children. But as child psychologists and other experts around the world have reminded us, our children are suffering enormous setbacks in their development. Rates of suicide, clinical depression and anxiety have skyrocketed in the last two years.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote No on the extension of Executive Order 13A or, if bundled with the governor's other emergency orders, then to vote No on the extension of all such orders.

We have done far more harm than good for our children by masking them for the last two years. It is high time that we stop.

Respectfully,

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