

Fairfield Township Board of Education  
277 Fairfield Road, Suite 208  
Fairfield, NJ 07004

Office of Governor  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

August 23, 2021

Honorable Governor Philip Murphy,

Please accept this correspondence from the Fairfield Township Board of Education as an official request that you consider changing the mask *mandate* to a mask *guideline*.

We make this request, after contemplating both your role and our role, in trying to provide the best possible education and educational environment for the children in our community. We believe that by changing the *mandate* to a *guideline* and providing some guidance in which schools can implement to address the many issues and concerns that parents of young children are expressing, will help start the year off calmly. For instance, an optional mask wearing program for the younger grades.

We believe that effective and definitive *guidelines* for this situation that addresses the various ages and levels, Pre-K – Elementary, Middle School, High School, of the student population would eliminate the frustration parents and school personnel are feeling. Creating *guidelines*, designed specifically for each educational level (preschool, elementary, middle school, high school, etc.) could include the steps already taken by districts such as: utilizing the use of existing required Health Professionals such as the contracted district's doctor and local health department. This would allow for each district to make educated decisions on how to move forward through this next phase of the Pandemic in a manner that satisfies the health needs of everyone involved in the education of our students.

Parents in our community are extremely concerned with the current mask *mandate* and how they feel it might infringe on their rights as a parent to make certain decisions for their children. We understand their concern and have compassion for the various views they express. To that end, we are asking you to reconsider a "one size fits all" *mandate* for districts and instead, replace it with mask *guidelines* to be designed for each educational level.

Currently there are so many options when adults and children attend various events in public that it only seems like a normal extension of those options to be extended into the educational environment as well. Per the CDC for the initial Pandemic timeframe of March 2020 to December 2020, there were 2,871,828 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the 0 to 24 years of age group with 54% for the 18-24 year olds, 16.3% for the 14-17 year olds, 7.9% for the 11-13 year olds and 10.9% for the 5-10 year olds. This data indicates that the age groups for adolescents

and younger children were much less susceptible to the virus. Given this considerably lower level of susceptibility, we again urge you to treat the adolescent and younger community differently and provide a mask *guideline* rather than a mask *mandate*. We need to get our children back to school with full day education, every day and remove every possible barrier in their way so they can achieve at the highest level.

Above are just a few of countless reasons that mask *guidelines* should be available to schools in New Jersey and why we are asking you to reconsider your mask *mandate* for adolescent and younger children. We urge you to allow the local districts, along with the guidance from their Health Professionals, to govern their district as the community members that elected them want them to.

Thank you for your time and stay well.

Sincerely,  
Fairfield Township Board of Education  
Mr. Brian Egan, President  
Mr. Pat Freda, vice President  
Mr. Anthony DePascale  
Mr. Jeff Didyk  
Dr. Mike Sapienza

Cc: Mayor James Gasparini  
Fairfield Town Council  
Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Susan Ciccotelli