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51 School Street
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NY 11779
631.471.1331



#WeAreSachem



Board of Education

September 14, 2021

Dear Governor Hochul,

As the Board of Education of one of the largest school districts in New York State, over the last two school years we have scrupulously complied with the restrictions imposed upon us by Executive Orders, Department of Health mandates and the related directives of public health officials regarding the operation of our schools. We have complied with mandates, testing mandates, social distancing requirements, and limits on the ability of our students to gather for clubs, athletics, performances, graduations, and other activities which are vital to the holistic educational experience of our children. But we continue to be acutely aware of the concerns of our community regarding the toll that this compliance has taken on the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of our children.

We write to request that you immediately take the steps necessary to revise protocols and provide concrete metrics for evaluating the requirements for the wearing of masks in schools. Too often, mandates have been hastily imposed, unclear or inconsistent, and have typically contained a directive for immediate compliance without any apparent consideration of potentially unintended consequences. We implore you to release clear guidelines based upon local infection rates and metrics rather than requiring compliance based upon inapplicable data. Our students, families, and staff members all want a safe school environment for everyone, but we seek sensible and transparent guidelines based on relevant local data as a part of that decision making process, particularly when it applies to mask mandates.

Many of our school district parents have demanded action to relieve them of what appear to be arbitrary applications of mask restrictions and quarantine protocols to children in schools, an environment which has had some of the lowest rates of transmission throughout the pandemic. Some have demanded that requirements for universal mask wearing be lifted. As their local representatives we ask that there at least be a reasonable set of transparent guidelines tied to scientific measures which set forth a pathway to provide relief from these mandates and a return to normalcy in our schools.

As we have previously stated, we have proven our ability to successfully implement COVID19 safety protocols in our classrooms and other school facilities. It is not an exaggeration to say that schools have become expert at We value the safety of our school community above all else. But we cannot

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ignore the negative consequences of inconsistent and sometimes overreaching requirements and limitations on the ability of our students to resume some semblance of normal lives. We implore you to let us advance our work to ensure the holistic social, emotional, academic, and mental well-being of our children. We always put safety first, but we should be guided by clear and sensible protocols that reflect the evolving body of scientific research supporting the proposition that mask restrictions in our schools can be modified based upon reasonable local metrics and measures of infection rates. At some point there must be agreement among the policy makers as to when the balance tips in favor of reducing restrictions, as we did successfully during our summer 2021 programs.

Finally, it appears that the issue of mandating COVID-19 vaccines is being considered by your office and state public health officials. Please be advised that the Sachem Board of Education supports the rights of families to choose whether or not their child is to receive the COVID-19 vaccination.

Sincerely,

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