
August 26, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

Congratulations on becoming the 57th Governor of the great state of New York. In the spirit of democracy, we extend the same wishes to you that we extend to all our elected officials. We thank you and appreciate all the effort and sacrifices you and all our public servants make on a daily basis and we will keep you in our thoughts and prayers. We know you face many difficult decisions, and we send our thoughts and prayers that you have an open mind and good advice as you move forward. Today, I write to you on behalf of the East Islip Board of Education. The East Islip Board of Education has been requesting a mask optional policy for the past six months. Due to the serious changing conditions as they relate to COVID and the Delta Variants, we want you to know we will support your decision for a mask mandate. This is clear evidence that in the name of democracy we are willing to adjust our position based on the changing needs in society. We, as the Board of Education, do have a request, our communities are bitterly divided across the state over the mask issue. It saddens us that neighbors will turn on neighbors because over the past several months we have not had decisive action from the executive branch of our government.

We respectfully request the following:

- At what point can we go from mask mandates to wearing masks on busses, halls, and common areas but allowed to take them down when seated at their desks?
- What point will it go from that option to masks being optional?

You spoke in your opening address about uniting the entire state from your hometown in Buffalo to Montauk Point to Lake Erie to the Atlantic Ocean from sea to shining sea. We believe that giving us target numbers using the state positivity rate would give us all incentive to pull together. We would respectfully defer to your medical experts on the percentages but here's an example: when the positivity rate drops below 2%, school districts can opt to go to a restaurant style option when masks are worn on buses, in hallways and common areas but removed when students are at their desks. If the numbers drop below 1%, districts can opt to go masks optional.

In order to conquer this terrible disease, we are learning to adjust and live with it. Divided communities are wasting valuable time and energy in a fruitless quest to be right. Our proposal will not be accepted by the extremists on both sides of this issue, but we believe it is a safe, healthy, compromise that will pull the majority together. Competition is healthy and giving us target numbers will create healthy competition.

Governor Hochul, we implore you to tear down that wall of secrecy and uncertainty that has clouded the executive branch for too long. Governor Hochul tear down that wall that is dividing our communities. Governor Hochul, tear down that wall of secrecy and ambiguity and give us concrete numbers and concrete goals, based on the state positivity rate. We believe people of New York will rise up and meet the challenge.

We eagerly anticipate your response. Good Luck and Godspeed.

Sincerely,

John V. Dolan
Superintendent of Schools