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SEAFORD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD OF EDUCATION • 1600 WASHINGTON AVENUE • SEAFORD • NEW YORK • 11783 • (516) 592-4012

June 13, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber
New York State Capital Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Allowing mask choice in schools

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The Seaford Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools understand the complexities associated with managing the pandemic within New York State. However, inconsistencies in recent communications issued by your office have been frustrating to the Board, Administration, and community.

We are writing to request that you reconsider the mandates currently in place for our schools and allow for the optional wearing of masks which was promoted in the letter issued by Dr. Zucker on June 4, 2021. As stated in that correspondence:

"Indoors, mask use will be strongly encouraged but not required for students, campers, and staff/teachers/counselors who are not fully vaccinated."

The health and welfare of our students, their families and staff are of utmost importance. Throughout the pandemic, our district diligently followed every regulation issued from your office and the guidance issued by NYSDOH. We were one of the few communities that began the school year with every child having access to in-person instruction every day. We are very proud of the safe environment we have provided for our community. However, we must voice our concerns as to the affects that continued mask wearing is having on the social, mental, and emotional well-being of our students.

With the low positivity rate and the high vaccination rate in Nassau County it is time to return to normal by removing these restrictions. There is a mitigated risk of contracting COVID-19 in a school setting, yet the social emotional toll of remaining masked has escalated and has become untenable. Our focus must be on educating our students, and not responding to mask removal requests. To this end, please issue guidance that allows students, teachers, and staff the choice to attend summer programs both indoors and outdoors without masks. We also request that you provide guidelines for the upcoming school year no later than July 4, 2021 to allow the district and its employees to properly plan for school in September and implore you to make masks for students or employees a personal choice option.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this matter. We look forward to receiving your response to these requests.

Sincerely,

Bruce A. Kahan
President

Kevin Devlin
Vice President

Dr. Adelle V. Pecora
Superintendent of Schools

Andrea Parisi
Trustee

Natalie Pedisich
Trustee

Stacie Stark
Trustee