



February 16, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
New York State Governor
New York State Capitol Bldg.
Albany, NY 12224

**Greene County
Legislature**

411 Main Street
Suite 408
Catskill, New York 12414

**Re: COVID - Mask Mandate relief for schools and
Mandate relief for ongoing testing of unvaccinated school staff**

Dear Governor Hochul:

As the governing body of Greene County in upstate New York, we are respectfully requesting an urgent end to your mandates that all school students and staff must wear masks in response to the threat of COVID-19 and its variants, as well as your mandate for ongoing testing of unvaccinated school staff.

The mask mandate, which began during your predecessor's reign, has gone on for far too long and has interfered and severely affected the lives of our youngest and most innocent residents, our children. We firmly believe that mask-wearing for this length of time can cause serious physical, psychological and developmental harm which outweigh any remaining benefits to mask wearing.

In addition, masks hinder necessary communication between students and teachers, bus drivers and other students. How are children supposed to learn academics from their teachers and socially interact with their peers without being able to hear their words clearly or see their facial expressions? As much as masks are touted to be a health and safety issue, where is the safety when a child is crossing a road, in a rural county such as ours, and cannot hear the bus driver's instructions?

We also firmly believe that widespread mask-wearing is an overreaction influenced by the constant barrage of publicity regarding COVID-19 in the press. Furthermore, we truly feel that mask mandates and the testing of unvaccinated school staff should be under the jurisdiction of Home Rule, not something mandated down from State government.



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In conclusion, we would like to note with significant importance that not only do we feel this way, all of the schools in Greene County are coming to us, asking for relief from the mask mandate and testing of unvaccinated school staff.

We understand you will be reviewing data after the school break in February in order to make further determination regarding mask-wearing in schools and continued testing of unvaccinated school staff. The logic in this escapes us, as it would be more appropriate and efficient to make this determination prior to the students and staff returning to school. Realizing schools throughout New York State have different dates for February winter breaks, we are appealing to you to end the State requirement of wearing masks in New York State schools, as well as end the State requirement of scheduled testing of unvaccinated school staff, effective on or before Friday, February 25th, 2022.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Luvera". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Matthew Luvera
Vice-Chairman,
on behalf of the entire
Greene County Legislature

ML/lid