



OKANOGAN SCHOOL DISTRICT #105

Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Present, Shaping the Future

August 12, 2021

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Re: Mask-wearing Requirements in K-12 Schools

Dear Governor Inslee,

The Okanogan School Board of Directors feel the time to lift the mask requirement for K-12 students has arrived. While we have no objection to allowing the optional use of masks, and support families who make this choice, the current constraints, cause more harm than good for a variety of reasons. Considering you have now stated Washington State is “fully open”, we feel it is more than appropriate to allow us to make these decisions at the local level.

As you make your decision regarding this critical topic, we would respectfully request that you consider the following rationale:

- Equity: Mask wearing creates significant engagement challenges for English Language students. Over 30% of our student population is Hispanic, many of whom are EL students. Additionally, special education students are struggling to fully access their specially designed instruction, especially in speech and language.
- Numerous side effects of mask wearing are harming progress in the education setting. Students have reported experiencing headaches, dermatitis and infection, impaired verbal and non-verbal communication and blocked emotional signaling.
- Student mental health issues are at an overwhelming high. Depression, social anxiety, and lack of motivation are plaguing students statewide. In our community, students are withdrawing from school due to the mask mandate in turn, perpetuating the problem.
- Vaccinations are readily available for students over 12 years of age.
- COVID 19 does not pose a serious threat for children. There have been no child deaths in Okanogan County due to COVID 19 since the onset of the pandemic.
- Clearly, it is the desire of our well-informed community (see attached documentation) to allow us to make decisions at a local level regarding the health and well-being of our students.

This is our proactive attempt to make you aware of what is happening in our community. The State Superintendent has now threatened schools with frozen funding if we do not comply, and has left our hands tied. As a board, we implore you to reevaluate the decision you have made to better serve our students and communities.

While we could provide numerous additional reasons to support our request, it is clear to us that the negative effects of mask-wearing truly impedes the progress we are making when it comes to fulfilling the paramount

duty of Washington State - ...”to make ample provision for the **education** of all children residing within its borders.”

Thank you for considering this important matter and we look forward to a decision that will truly support the advancement in education for our children.

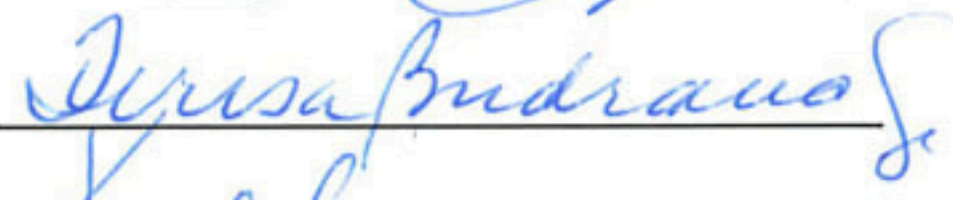
Sincerely,

Okanogan School District Board of Directors

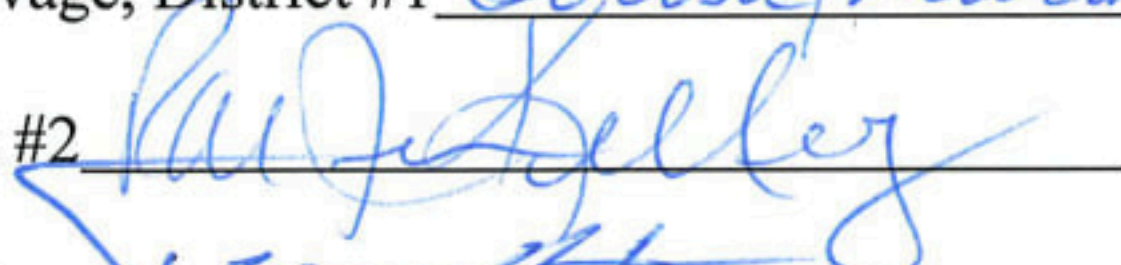
Board Chair Kevin Oyler, District #5



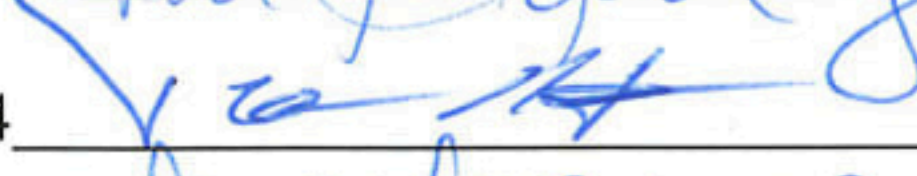
Vice Chair Teresa Budravage, District #1



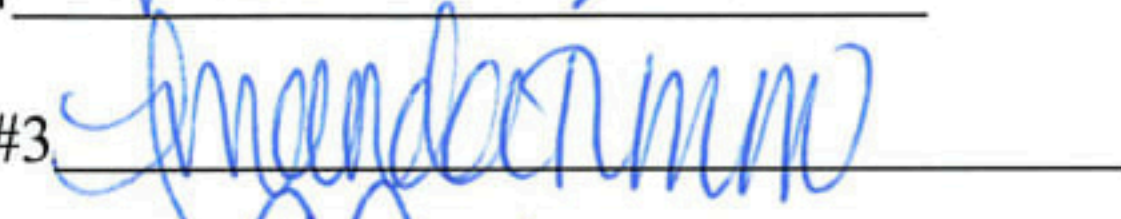
Rae Jean Kelley, District #2



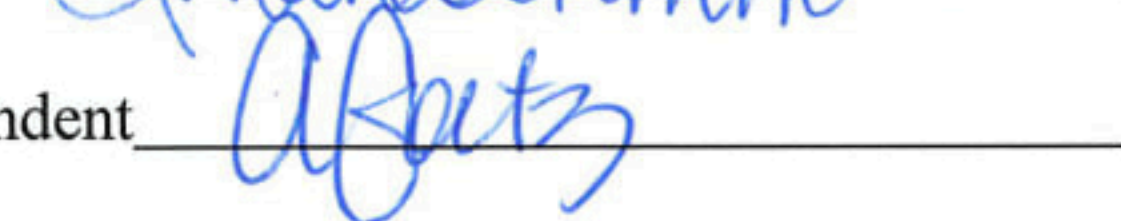
Tony Hawley, District #4



Amanda Timm, District #3



Ashley Goetz, Superintendent



encl: Packet of community letters supporting the removal of the mandated K-12 mask-wearing requirements.

cc: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Dr. Umair A. Shah, Secretary of Health