

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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December 7, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

I write on behalf of the County of El Dorado, asking your support of our local schools' efforts to return to the safe, normal education of our children. Our County Superintendent of Schools, along with the superintendents of all of the County's 15 K-12 districts, wrote you on the subject on November 9th of this year. My purpose now is to affirm our Board of Supervisors' support of the message the superintendents conveyed.

The 15 school districts in El Dorado County have strived throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain quality instruction while ensuring the safety of students and staff alike. Our schools were among the first in California to resume full-time, in-person instruction, all the while following California Department of Public Health (CDPH) mandates.

In October of this year, you directed CDPH to require a COVID-19 vaccination for all K-12 students once the vaccine received full approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Our understanding is that the mandate could go into effect by July 2022, with exemptions possible for religious and medical reasons.

Adhering to the various pandemic-related mandates has placed the burden of implementation and enforcement on teachers, principals, administrators and school boards. This includes fielding countless complaints and managing the frustrations increasingly common among the general public, efforts which distract education professionals from their primary mission.

We ask specifically for several actions by the State. The first is to communicate clearly to the public that it is the State which creates the mandates for masking and vaccines, and not local authorities.

Secondly, local conditions must inform the implementation of COVID-related safety guidelines, including those for masks, quarantines and the resumption of normal classroom instruction.

County public health officers should be allowed the authority to adapt CDPH guidelines to fit a community's unique conditions.

Additionally, it would be helpful, for both County leadership and the general public, to understand the data on which your decisions and those of CDPH have been based. Specifically, we are interested in knowing the studies, medical evidence or other information demonstrating that unmasked children are at risk. We will appreciate your providing that information as soon as possible.

Still further, we ask that the State identify the benchmarks that must be met in order for universal masking in classrooms to end. And finally, we urge the continuing availability of certain exemptions to any vaccine mandates.

It is a continuous and vital effort on the part of educators, as well as of the community as a whole, to ensure a quality education for our children while keeping them safe. And we respectfully ask your support of this mission, allowing our local school districts to return to in-person instruction in the most normal way possible.

Sincerely,

John Hidahl
Chair, Board of Supervisors