

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 8:09:09

NAME: Diana Korczynski

TOPIC: Mask Mandate

COMMENTS: There are about 37,000 students in Johnston County. The 500 expected “protestors” of the mask mandate is < 2% . You do the math. This does not make up a “majority voice”. Not that that even matters when it comes to public health and safety. The majority of JCPS support mandatory masks when we have a 43% positivity rate amongst those tested. Our hospitals are full. Do not gamble with our children’s health because a select few are trying to bully you into it. It’s not about death counts, it’s about exposure counts/ hospital counts/long term covid counts. Follow the data, do the math. Set forth transparent criteria that all parents can track to so we know when it will be safe to remove the mandate and stop this insanity. There are too many other things we need to be focused on in our schools. Remember- your role is not to cater to parents. It’s to “provide a sound, basic, quality education for all Johnston County Public Schools in a safe and orderly environment”. You won’t see droves of supporters there today to support the mask mandate. Do not mistake that for people not caring about it or believing in it. All are being cautious about Covid and/or do not wish to engage with the circus that has become today’s BOE meeting. We are out there, in droves. We are watching, and we are all voters. All 98% of us.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 8:45:47

NAME: Steven Harder

TOPIC: Masks

COMMENTS: Masks need to be up to the parents! It is hard for some people to understand what someone is saying when they are wearing a mask making it hard to learn. If you can sit in a restaurant or lunch room without one why not a classroom? Also it can and does affect my sons asthma making it more difficult to breathe. Even with him being a "higher risk" he is more comfortable and has less issues when not wearing one. We are already looking into both kids out of this school due to the forced masking.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 8:56:45

NAME: Melissa Jones

TOPIC: Face masks

COMMENTS: I am writing in concern to the mask mandate possibly being overturned. I can't for the life of me even understand why people are fighting against them, besides the fact that they just want something to fight about. There is nothing insignificant about a deadly virus. I work in healthcare, masks work. Nobody is going to put my children in harm's way, especially people just out to fight for their "freedoms" or representatives who do not represent me or my district, or people who have children that are home schooled. The cases are going up. The hospital system I work for is running out of beds! This is real, people are dying, and kids can also become very sick and die, regardless of what the loud minority wants you to believe. I urge you to follow the science and countless medical professionals who do this day in and day out, and keep the mask mandate in place. Please don't allow these conspiracy believing, science denying, so-called freedom fighters, to put our children at risk. If they are so against masks, let them send their kids virtually. The small, loud minority should not be dictating what is healthy for everybody else's children. Thank you.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 9:01:00

NAME: Jessica Bingham

TOPIC: Masking and other things

COMMENTS: Please continue to put our children's safety and ability to spend the most days in the classroom that they can by continuing to mandate masks in school. I also want to say even if I dont agree with all board members, I appreciate you all for sitting on the board and showing up to each and every meeting, especially with the growing divide in this community.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 9:02:32

NAME: Christine Bove

TOPIC: Mask Mandate and CRT

COMMENTS: Good morning members of the board. The "parents for freedom" group is expected to out in full force today. I plead for you not to let them persuade any of you from changing the previous vote to require masks in schools. As you know, many children are too young to get vaccinated and masks are the only protection they have from getting Covid. It's not perfect, but it's something for now. The students have been doing just fine with them despite what the other side is saying. Please continue following guidelines. Our numbers are rising and we have to do everything we can to protect these kids as they attend school.

CRT should be a non-issue and definitely not a reason to hold funding for our schools in which this topic isn't even discussed. This is shameful. Our continue to struggle daily due to lack of funding and our teachers are grossly underpaid. We're in a crisis with this pandemic and our schools need money more than ever.

Ignore the spectacle the "freedom parents" will cause today. They think being loud and obnoxious is the way to get what they want. They have no interest in protecting our children. I urge you all to extended the mask mandate so our children can continue to be in classrooms where they thrive. Thank you.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 9:11:32

NAME: Michelle Goard

TOPIC: Mask Mandate vs. Optional Mask

COMMENTS: Good Morning All Board Members,

I am a parent of a teenager that attends Corinth Holders High School. I am asking the board to please keep mandating masks for all teachers, students and staff at all the Johnston County public schools. I feel if the board decides to leave it up to the parents than if the parents that did not have their teen vaccinated or wear masks then the spread of this virus will continue. The numbers for the state has proven this. I want my daughter and all the teachers, staff and students to enjoy their school year without worrying if they will get Covid and sent home and possibly be admitted in the hospital. I feel if you leave the option up then the ones who wears a mask they may get bullied or teased. It would be best to keep the mask as a mandate. Please keep masks in schools. The goal is to keep all of the teachers, students and staff at school for the entire school year. My parents had Covid last Christmas and it was so scary. I almost lost them both to Covid. Thank the good lord they recovered but both have long term side effects. Our teen daughter has been fully vaccinated and will wear a mask. It concerns me that a lot of people think masks and vaccines are political and it should not be. My daughter had brain surgery 2 years ago and that alone is enough to scare any parent but I am so cautious for her safety. I did choose virtual for her last year when vaccines was not available. This year was a very hard to decision to send her to school but I know she needs the interaction with others. Covid is real and is very scary. I just hope and pray none of the board members change the mask mandate policy to optional. I'm afraid what may happen to the staff, teachers and students.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 9:41:31

NAME: Samantha A.

TOPIC: Masks

COMMENTS: The numbers are speaking for themselves. Union county created chaos and continuous quarantines by refusing to keep their children safe. Let's continue to stand strong and keep our children safe by following guidelines and keeping the masks for now. In fact, let's take the mask discussion off of the table - let it stand as is for now - and let's focus on some issues that need real addressing, such as the bus shortage, transportation issues, teacher assistant shortages, and school funding.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 9:55:05

NAME: Amy Butler

TOPIC: Science

COMMENTS: Members of the Board,

I am writing to encourage you to continue to use science and evidence provided by our local and federal health officials in our fight to keep our students healthy and in school. Cases are high, staff is low, and masks are proving daily to be an effective tool to keep our kids in the classroom.

While many parents continue to push for parental choice, it needs to be heard and understood that if their choice directly impacts the health and safety of another child, then it cannot be allowed in our public schools. Mask are effective AND safe. The beauty of science is that it is not an opinion. It is proven fact. You cannot have an opposing opinion to a fact.

Because none of us WANT to wear masks, please consider creating a procedure and policy for how often to reevaluate masks in schools using metrics based on cases in our county and surrounding areas. This will ensure that parents are all aware of what needs to happen before a change in masking policy would be made.

There are more people of this mindset in Johnston County than one might assume, because we are not the loud ones. Loud does not equal right.

Additional topics of concern regarding ensuring our kids are in the classroom - bus drivers. There have been at least two occasions where my high schooler's bus was going to be 2 hours late, therefore missing valuable instruction time if we hadn't been able to drive her. I ask that you make this a topic of priority.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the education of our young minds.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 10:04:34

NAME: Katie Allen

TOPIC: Masking Mandate

COMMENTS: As a parent of a Johnston County Elementary student I am asking you to please uphold the county wide mask mandate for K-12 schools.

Masking has been proven to aid in slowing the spread of COVID and is the best way to ensure our children can have the benefits of a face to face education.

Hospitals are at, or near to, capacity so any action taken within our community to relieve the strain and free medical resources for those that need them most is the right choice for our county as a whole.

I have been dismayed to learn about the large opposition rally planned for this evening's meeting. The invited political leaders and candidates are not representatives of Johnston County, nor indeed of North Carolina residents in some cases. I fear this gathering will do nothing but take up large amounts of our county's time and resources that could be put to better use for all students Johnston County serves. This rally serves no one but those candidates looking to increase their political celebrity.

Thank you for your service to our children and community. I pray for the safety of all who gather tonight.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 10:05:43

NAME: Ashley Mitchell

TOPIC: Mask Mandate to remain

COMMENTS: Please do what is best for the health of our county and allow the mask mandate to remain until the county has driven down the number of COVID cases and upped the number of people vaccinated. Don't let the whining of the privileged voters and citizens out way what is best for everyone's health. Our children are not oppressed or in any danger because they wear a mask. The same way seatbelts can be a small annoyance at times they are made for the greater good. What is best in the long run isn't always fun. Let's follow the recommendation of scientist and Health officials and not be swayed by parents who only cares about themselves and momentary comforts. Thank you.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 10:07:37

NAME: Kathy Mendoza

TOPIC: Mask Mandate

COMMENTS: Dear BOE members,

I wanted to take a moment to express my support for your decision to mandate masks at schools. I firmly believe, and the science backs it up, that if it weren't for masks and people being vaccinated, our incidence of COVID would be higher. It is already nerve wracking to have calls almost on a daily basis because another positive has been identified at the schools. And knowing the shortage in teachers, I know that going fully virtual is simply not an option at this point.

I recognize the concerns of some parents in believing that our liberties are being stripped away by these policies. However, this is a special situation; a pandemic that has literally killed millions of people. And we MUST protect our most vulnerable... our children. I know it may be difficult, but know that you have a massive amount of parents, albeit not as loud as others, who support your decision to mask and protect our children!

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 10:14:03

NAME: Wayah Rose Colombo

TOPIC: Mask mandate

COMMENTS: Please continue to require masks in our schools to protect the children too young to receive the vaccine. Please also continue to enforce quarantines as recommended by the health department. I would also like to see students in quarantine offered better instruction while at home. They're expected to complete work at home that they're not learning in class due to being at home.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 10:33:37

NAME: Kristal Bell

TOPIC: September 14, 2021 BOE Meeting

COMMENTS: Good morning,

I am writing as a former JoCo teacher and parent to two students in JCPS high schools. I majored in Biology and obtained my Master's in Secondary Science Education, going on to teach 7th grade science at Cleveland and Swift Creek Middle schools.

First, I would like to thank the board for their decision to require masks in schools in order to keep as many students and staff in classrooms as possible. I appreciate the board's cooperation with our local health department in order to maintain safety within our buildings and encourage the development of metrics that can be used to revisit the mask situation as we move forward with this academic year. The sooner it is safe to attend schools without masking, the better! Unfortunately, based on our county's current metrics and advice from NCDHHS, the CDC, the AAP and the Johnston County Health Department, that time is not now.

I would also ask that the board not get distracted by a loud minority and focus on other serious concerns within our county, to include employee shortages and availability of resources for teachers and students. As I write this, there are 300+ job vacancies, to include 100+ vacancies among licensed positions. I left teaching a few years ago to raise a new little one, among other reasons, but the state of things within JoCo schools right now have certainly deterred me from seriously considering coming back. Lack of resources (for example availability of supplies and EC in my personal experience), lack of COVID safety considerations by some members of the board, and relatively low pay are just a few of my reservations.

When my husband and I moved to NC, JoCo was at the top of our list primarily due to the schools. I have admittedly regretted that decision at times over the past couple of years. However, I have hope that the majority of our BOE will continue to make sound decisions based on the best interests of ALL stakeholders within our school system; not just the loud minority which includes individuals who do not even have a stake in what occurs here. I can appreciate the pressure and burden that our board members face on a regular basis and especially while dealing with this pandemic. I thank you for your commitment to the success of our schools and for your time.

Best,
Kristal Bell (Bloomquist)

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 10:33:49

NAME: Virginia Clute

TOPIC: Masks in schools

COMMENTS: Masks are important to keep children safe especially in elementary school where that is the ONLY protection available to them. Also what is wrong with the Christian values to look out for your fellowman, is your personal freedom worth the risk of getting a child sick or the child bringing it home to their grandparents. I could get nasty and ask if people wear seatbelts I bet the do. If they get in an accident the only one they are hurting is themselves, not true with illnesses. I just am saddened by the selfishness of the people in our country that feel they are more important than their neighbor.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 10:44:31

NAME: Linda Bennett

TOPIC: Mask Up

COMMENTS: Johnston County is awash in Covid 19. Please protect our support staffs, teachers and students by continuing to require 100% masking. Let's all act like we care about public health. I ask you to care about "we" instead of just "me".

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 11:05:05

NAME: Tiffany Schoff

TOPIC: Mask mandate in schools

COMMENTS: First, thank you for enacting the current mandate in our schools. Second, I'm writing in hopes you will continue with those same rules moving forward. I have a child in our school system, therefore it directly effects my family. However I really want to point out the ripple effect masking has on our community as a whole. Keeping kids safe should always be a priority, but this is much bigger than that. We have to consider other household members, school staff, and the general population (elderly, high risk, etc) of our county in these decisions. I know you will be faced with much resistance in keeping the mandate, but the loudest people in the room are not always the majority. Consider that the folks wanting and needing a mandate are not comfortable with coming in large crowds for obvious reasons. Thank you for your time.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 10:59:11

NAME: Christopher Cox

TOPIC: Mask and vaccine mandates

COMMENTS: I believe all NC schools should require masks at all times and when the vaccine is approved for children it should be added to the list of required shots a child needs to attend NC public school. If parents want to exercise their rights to deny a vaccine and say no to masks, they need to pull their kids from the NC public school system. Public safety and health do not take a backseat to "personal freedoms", it is the other way around. You either accept the terms to attend public schools or you should withdraw your children.

The school board should not fold to these miscreants, make masks mandatory and add covid to the list of shots a child needs to go to these schools. I fully support a mask mandate and as does any sensible parents.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 11:26:33

NAME: Christin Murphy

TOPIC: Masks in Schools

COMMENTS: I am writing to request your continued support in requiring masks in Johnston County Schools. I know each of the Board members are aware that children now account for almost 30% of new cases in the last week. It has been proven that masks slow the spread of the virus and in combination with vaccines, they are the most effective way to prevent illness. My children are thrilled to be back at school and the only way to ensure we will be able to continue to provide in-person education is to make sure our students and teachers are safe and healthy. Your job as a member of the Board of Education is the act in the best interest of our students, teachers and staff. The answer is clear.

As a life-long resident of Johnston County, I am ashamed that we are having to fight this issue. The political show being planned is embarrassing and nothing more than a plea for attention and a fundraiser for politicians who don't represent our citizens. There have been threats by members of these groups of taking up arms and using violence at tonight's planned protest. This has gone too far and I am asking each of you to take your political affiliations out of this decision and vote with only the best interest of our children in mind.

My fiancé and I had hoped to come to speak this evening, but do not feel safe doing so. I truly hope this meeting is an effective forum for all and the protests are peaceful. Thank you for your tireless work and efforts to protect and educate our children. We will be watching online. Stay safe tonight.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 11:42:41

NAME: Thomas wilson

TOPIC: Masks and vaccines

COMMENTS: Not only do I believe it should be at the students and staffs discretion to wear a mask or get vaccinated, I hope the board will lobby local and state officials to preserve the right for everyone to make that choice for themselves

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 12:11:35

NAME: KRISTEN Ewald

TOPIC: Mandatory masks in schools

COMMENTS: Please continue to keep all of our children safe in school by keeping the mask mandate. We do many things to keep our children safe from the time they are born, and this should be no different than every other precaution we as parents and a community do. When our kids are little, we safely put them in car seats to protect them in a car accident. When we send them outside, we use bug spray and sunscreen to protect them. When they ride their bikes, they wear helmets. As parents, it is our #1 responsibility to protect our children, and as a school board you have the same responsibility when our children are in your care. The other side of this debate is not calling out for freedom when it comes to the dress code. They are not crying about parents choice when it comes to disciplinary consequences in schools. I truly feel that they are willing to sacrifice other children in order to hit a political button that will gain them the attention they seem to crave. This is further shown by inviting people like Maddison Cawthorn, who only cares about the attention he receives - good or bad. Please do not bow down to this tactic. Furthermore, there are over 36,000 students in JCPS, do not fall for their false claim that they are the majority.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 13:01:27

NAME: Rebekah Grafton

TOPIC: Keeping the mask mandate in schools

COMMENTS: I am the mother of 2 first graders at Cleveland Elementary and while I know masks are not on the agenda for today's meeting, I don't want the voices of the anti-mask protesters to be louder than us parents who are in favor of continuing to require masks. I am in support of masking in schools for 2 reasons - 1) my children's safety and 2) avoiding preventable quarantines.

Addressing the second reason first, my children are currently in quarantine because I tested positive for Covid on August 30th. I have been fully vaccinated since March, we wear masks in public, and we limit our social interactions; we have no idea where I contracted the virus.

Thankfully my children have remained healthy and tested negative, however, the Health Department has required that they quarantine for 10 days past my 10th day, leaving them out of school for 3 weeks. We had to do MAP testing virtually and we have struggled through trying to teach 2 first graders, who also have a younger sibling, and managing our own work schedules. I am an attorney and my husband works for a clinical laboratory and time off from work directly and negatively impacts our clients and our workplaces. If my children aren't masked in school, I understand that they will have to quarantine every time they are exposed in their classroom.

This is unfair to them (who wear their masks without complaint) and it is an incredible challenge to our family of two full-time working parents.

I am also incredibly worried for the safety and health of my children. My twins were born a bit prematurely and my son contracted pneumonia at birth. He spent 8 days in the NICU at Wake Med and I watched my newborn infant son breathe through a bipap machine. Every respiratory virus he has contracted has resulted in breathing challenges and often pneumonia. He contracted the flu in February of 2020 and was almost hospitalized with pneumonia. He is also just a normal 6 year old boy who thrives by being around his friends and his peers. While we did the best we could with school last year, his December MAP scores were lower than his beginning of year MAP scores. They were signed up for face to face learning, but of course, the schedule was very limited last fall. He learns best in the classroom. He has a right to a public education and he has a right to getting that public education without unnecessarily risking his health. Science has proven that masks work.

Please help our children have the most normal year possible with minimal quarantines and maximum precautions for their health by keeping the mask requirement in place.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 13:16:30

NAME: Sarah Toler

TOPIC: masks in schools

COMMENTS: Please continue to follow guidance from the health dept regarding masks in schools. What motivation do our children have to pursue science degrees, medical degrees, or any degree at all if the Board of Education shows them that the education and science behind these decisions is disregarded in favor of the opinion of people who have no experience in the medical research or scientific community. We all want to continue to have a regular school year where our children are allowed to attend school in person, at full capacity. We have had a great year so far with low numbers of positive cases. Please keep it that way.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 13:26:06

NAME: Anonymous

TOPIC: Facilities

COMMENTS: West View: incredible leadership and staff, but not given tools to succeed. Carpool/parking is a huge issue, teachers still without assistants, current assistants gone 1/2 day for bus routes, playground no equipment, no safe barrier to playground from road. In general ,Thanksgiving elem is the newest school but is so bland; let's get some exciting design and COLOR besides beige in our schools.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 13:30:48

NAME: Anonymous

TOPIC: Masking

COMMENTS: ANYTHING but virtual, even if that means masks...but Why not a compromise like; no masking in own classroom, but everywhere else communal. And why aren't we buying classroom air filters that kill 99% of viruses?

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 13:37:02

NAME: David Bell

TOPIC: Masks and vaccines in Johnston Co Schools

COMMENTS: My son attends Dixon Road Elementary and I fully support the wearing of masks and mandatory vaccinations for staff at Johnston County Schools. I hope that the BOE will continue to listen to the real science and continue doing the right and responsible thing and not listen to a bunch of conspiracy theorists.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 14:06:49

NAME: Julie White

TOPIC: Keep masks mandatory in schools

COMMENTS: Board members, please keep masks mandatory in schools in Johnston County. COVID-19 continues to infect and kill our friends and family. Masks give our children the opportunity to continue in person learning while protecting them, their teachers, and the loved ones they live with. Please do not hear the loud "parent choice" group and think it represents a majority. It does not. The mask my child wears protects other children. It is not too much to ask for those children to protect mine. If we listen to the experts in this matter we know masks and vaccines aren't 100% but they are the best defense we have and a way to a more normal future. Please keep our children safe and keep masks mandatory.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 14:09:37

NAME: Matt Lotti

TOPIC: Mask Policy

COMMENTS: My wife and I have two children in JCPS and are grateful that masking is mandatory. We know that optional masking would invariably result in many missed days of school for our kids and any students who would need to quarantine bc of proximity to non-vaccinated or non-masked students who test positive.

As was the case for many families, last year was very tough academically and socially for both of our children, particularly our youngest. My ALMS 8th grader has ADHD and a corresponding IEP. It was nearly impossible for her teachers to accommodate her needs with virtual school last year. Additionally, she felt very isolated and became depressed. Like many ADHD children, she thrives off of social interaction. She is so happy to be back in school and to be able to interact with her teachers and peers in person. We are seeing a marked improvement in her academic performance over last year; she brought home a 99% on a Math test last week! We are so proud of her. We know that her performance and mental health would suffer if the decision is reversed and quarantines become a regular occurrence. Our fear is that she and many students would be in-and-out of school constantly bc of the quarantine policy.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 14:18:04

NAME: Lucas Seitz

TOPIC: Importance of masks

COMMENTS: As our county remains far under the threshold for the vaccines to be effective in limiting the spread of COVID, rescinding the mask mandates for schools would be harmfully detrimental for one of our lowest percentage vaccinated populations. Other vaccinations are already required for school attendance, and the fact that schools have a dress code demonstrates the ability of the schools to police what the students have on their persons. Please do not follow suit of Union county and give way to conspiracy and the willfully uninformed.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 14:21:17

NAME: Anne-Marie Hand

TOPIC: Mask Mandate

COMMENTS: As Covid cases among children rise drastically, I implore you to keep our children safe and keep the mask mandate. You may believe that the parents who make up the anti mask movement are in the majority, but you would be mistaken. Just because these parents are loud, doesn't make them right. Most of these parents don't even have children in the Johnston County school district. They are privileged enough to send their kids to private schools and are recruiting members with gift cards and free food. MOST of the parents in Johnston County want their children in school SAFELY in person. Without a mask mandate we will see more cases and more quarantines. I think we can all agree that no one wants that. No one wants the schools to shut down.

Please do what is best for the children! Turn off the noise of the anti mask protesters. Ignore the special guests who have NOTHING to do with our county! Please keep the mask mandate. Thank you for your time.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 14:31:45

NAME: Rachael Mullan

TOPIC: Mask mandate

COMMENTS: Good evening - as a parent of 3 children, I urge that the mask mandate remains in place until vaccines are available for all school aged children. The dashboard shows that quarantines and positive cases are steady, not out of control, which indicates that masks are preventing large outbreaks and spread across our schools. Removing the mandate would allow for increased spread and cause more children to have to quarantine for 10 days at a time, missing valuable instruction in class. While the other side, who supports optional masks, may have a louder voice, I ask that the board members keep the safety of the children at the forefront of the decision, not the politics that their group is pushing. Safety and learning needs to remain the most important part.

Thank you, Rachael Mullan

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 14:40:48

NAME: Sharon Doughty

TOPIC: Keeping masks mandated

COMMENTS: Please keep with your decision to keep masks mandated . If the decision is reversed I am certain there will be an increase in positive Covid cases and more students and staff members will need to quarantine . The schools are already short staffed with teachers and subs to fill those positions , the situation will only get worse. The mask mandate is allowing our students to be in schools and that is what is best for everyone , it's a sense of normalcy , consistent , face to face instruction with their teachers and socialization with others . Masks do add an additional layer of protection. Many of our students can not get vaccinated as they are too young or do not wish to and I understand that. This mask can help prevent the quick spread of Covid and we should all be collectively working together to make our learning environment safe so that we can all continue to attend school face to face. We wear seats belts, helmets, shirts into restaurants, follow the speed limit , I'm not sure why the masks upset people so much. Wearing a mask may be a slight inconvenience but that inconvenience should not come before the safety of the students and staff of JoCo county . Please stick with your current decision as that is what is responsible and best .

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 14:49:28

NAME: Erin Kepich

TOPIC: Mask Mandate

COMMENTS: One main purpose of the public education system is to provide a safe learning environment. While the virus continues to spread throughout our community, the best way to keep the children safe is to continue to have everyone wear a mask. We want to see the numbers in the county go down and hopefully they will as people continue to wear their mask to mitigate the spread of the deadly virus. If we end the mandate early, the numbers will surely increase and they will also increase for our children. How many children have to get sick, or God forbid, die, to say it's enough, we need to protect them? Last Spring when Face to Face was an option again, there was no complaint about wearing a mask, b/c it was what was required. As I walk my child to school every day I see the children wearing their masks with no complaints. It seems easy for them. It's not fun but it is the right thing to do. Even my 5 year old can understand that. Please do the right thing to keep our kids safe.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 15:24:09

NAME: Jennifer Kinnebrew

TOPIC: Mask Mandate and School Needs

COMMENTS: BOE Members, I currently have 3 JCPS students who were all virtual last year. This year virtual was not a viable option for our family. We sincerely appreciate that our board decided to have a mask mandate and hope that they continue to have a mask mandate as numbers and community spread are close to some of our peak numbers here in the county. According to the Johnston County Dept of Public Health, our current positivity rate is 14.7% and the Director mentioned wanting to be under 5%. We have a long way to go in our community in order for this to happen. Being that kids under 12 do not have the option to be vaccinated we need to protect them against the incidence of community spread and KEEP mask mandates in our schools. I have 2 kids who are high-risk asthmatics and one child with a Genetic Disorder that puts him at an even higher risk. All my children have adapted well to wearing their masks in school and have never complained that it was hindering them in any way. They love being in school with their friends and their lovely teachers. I strongly encourage our county to continue to keep masks mandated until our community positivity rate is under 5%. I would also like to speak in regards to the extraordinary number of teacher and staff vacancies that are weighing heavy on our schools throughout the state of NC but even more so in Johnston County. Something has got to be done so that we can have successful schools for our children. We need the county to hire their own bus drivers so that we can be successful in hiring TAs. TA's don't want to drive a BUS!!!! I know of at least 5 licensed teachers that are more than willing to step up to be a TA BUT refuse to drive a bus and rightfully so. WHY are we as a county missing out on all these qualified people when we can just hire bus drivers. I implore the board to come up with a better strategy and FAST in order to help fill vacancies as soon as possible. Thank you for your time.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 15:42:30

NAME: Megan Lewis

TOPIC: Masks

COMMENTS: Please continue to require masks. As a teacher who wears a mask all day and as a parent of a Johnston County student, I am thankful masks have prevented my student from having to quarantine. Let's keep our kids in school by continuing to wear masks.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 15:59:15

NAME: Sarah Newton

TOPIC: Please keep the masks

COMMENTS: Thank you for the opportunity to share a few considerations with you. I wanted to be able to share my thoughts in person, but the timeline for signing up to speak makes it very difficult for those who work to be able to participate in person.

I share these thoughts as a Johnston County native, former JCPS employee, and extremely concerned citizen with some sweet little cousins in your care.

It is my understanding that some board members, teachers, and leaders have received threats and harassment from those with different views lately and that is incredibly disturbing.

I ask you to continue to do what you know is safest for our students and staff in this hostile environment. What is the alternative? Many mask optional schools have returned to virtual instruction and a friend reports a new mobile morgue in her mask optional district. This is not an acceptable option for Johnston County.

Consider also that teachers will likely leave for better pay, resources, and safety measures to the county right next door.

Focus on what's most important and what we all have in common. Let's focus on knocking this out so we can get back to normal, keeping our kids safe, keeping our schools safely in person, overcoming funding disparities, filling teacher vacancies, finding quality subs, and helping our instructional assistants working themselves to death and then driving buses.

Don't cave to the pressure, do what's right for our schools. Keep masks mandatory and our students safe.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 16:09:43

NAME: Lauren Scherzinger

TOPIC: Mask Mandate

COMMENTS: I would like the current Mask Mandate to stay in place until Covid cases have significantly decreased and vaccines become available to children of all ages. My children are 9, 5, and 3 and have no issue wearing masks in class and understand the importance of keeping themselves, and classmates safe from becoming ill. It's unfortunate that adults don't share the same concern.

Please continue to keep our children in masks to prevent another outbreak.

Thank you

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 16:16:34

NAME: William Martin Scherzinger IV

TOPIC: Masks must be worn in school to protect our community

COMMENTS: Masks should be worn in school. It is embarrassing that this is even a discussion. Anti-maskers are paying \$100 gift cards to gain support and supplying food and beverages to those that attend. The exact things that they lobbied against in order to suppress voters rights.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 16:32:18

NAME: Rick Mercier

TOPIC: The Nihilist Spectacle

COMMENTS: Good evening, board members and Dr. Bracy. I worry for you. I worry for you because I don't know what will be worse for you this evening—the viral load you will be exposed to or the load of something else.

Tonight, as my family stays home quarantined thanks to a possible COVID exposure at one of our daughter's schools, you will have the privilege of witnessing firsthand some of the most critical failings of our educational system—and our society at large. You will be treated to a rage-fueled parade of anti-intellectual, anti-science nihilists who are willing to tear down our public school system and our democratic institutions to boot.

It's appalling that a thug, a fomenter of political violence and an accused sexual predator, would be invited to come from across the state to speak at our local school board meeting. We don't need hateful outsiders coming here and stirring up trouble so they can get another YouTube clip and raise some more campaign funds.

Does any sensible person any longer have any doubts about the judgement and motives of the local activists who would invite a person of such ill repute—who has no stake in our schools—to come here to try to bully you? Even our district's representative, David Rouzer, who is a Jesse Helms protege, has enough sense to stay away from these nuts.

This grotesque carnival of fear, anger and negativity illustrates that these local activists do not really care about the health and well being of our children, our educators and our communities. They are looking only to further an extremist—and extremely harmful—political agenda.

We must take the threat that these violence-endorsing extremists pose seriously, and decent people from all walks of life must come together to stand up to them and tell them that they do not represent our communities here in Johnston County.

It is time to redirect our focus to our real challenges, including teacher and other critical staffing shortages; severely overcrowded and underfunded schools; and numerous low-performing schools where students who entered our school system without all of the tools and opportunities needed to succeed have, in too many cases, fallen further and further behind.

Board members: I applaud your service, your diligence and the courage and integrity a majority of you have shown by putting reason, facts and our children's best interests above politics. There is a quiet majority that sees you, that sees what you are doing and is supportive. Stay the course and lead us wisely and courageously during these difficult times. Thank you.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 16:39:06

NAME: Sara Gibson

TOPIC: Masks

COMMENTS: Please do not cave to people who are screaming about “their rights”. Instead, think about the teachers and students, who have a right to feel safe in school. Think about the elementary students, for whom wearing masks is the best prevention we have at this time. Think of the teachers who care for their elderly parents, some who may be immunocompromised.

This is not a political issue, and it never should have become one. This is a public health crisis and we need to listen, and more importantly, trust what the science has shown as best practice.

Think of those whose voice can't be heard - not the people who can yell the loudest.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 16:42:29

NAME: Jennylee Spottswood

TOPIC: Mask Mandate

COMMENTS: Members of the board,

First of all, I want to thank you for keeping our kids as safe as possible this school year. By mandating masks, you are sending a message that you care about our students and staff. We need our kids to be in school as many days as possible and the only way to achieve this is through mandatory masking until the Covid case numbers go down.

We currently have 1543 people at home in Johnston county with covid right now. 55 people are in the hospital. This time last year we only had 402 people at home with covid in the whole county and 19 in the hospital. This data is pulled from our county's website comparing September 14th, 2021 to a year ago today. The danger is not over yet. This is still a highly transmissible virus.

Everyday I hear of another neighbor, friend, or loved one who has been touched by this virus. Consider yourself blessed if you have not been affected personally yet: Please keep the mask mandate in place so all of our children and staff can feel safe coming to school. I have friends in South Carolina and Tennessee that are dealing with record numbers of students and teachers absent due to their lack of a mask mandate. Teachers are quitting. They don't have enough subs so they are resorting to virtual learning. We already have a teacher and bus driver shortage, we cannot afford to gamble with the health of our students and staff or the valuable instruction time for our students this year. Thank you.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 16:45:34

NAME: Wendy L Koerber

TOPIC: Pro mask mandate

COMMENTS: The mask mandate needs to remain in place. More and more children are becoming infected with the virus and being the virus home to infect their families. Being autoimmune compromised I am more susceptible to being reinfected even though we are doing our part and have been vaccinated. Because our children are too young to receive the vaccination at this time it is important to protect them and those they are around, with the only measure we have, until we can take additional measures can be taken. A mask mandate is not a freedom that being taken from us but a way that we can free ourselves from this virus and continue to live healthy happy lives.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 16:50:08

NAME: Anne Marie McClean

TOPIC: Masks in school

COMMENTS: I am writing to request and encourage the Board to keep the mask mandate in place in order to slow the spread of Covid 19 and to keep our kids in school. Those that argue that it is their right to not wear masks fail to appreciate the impact that they don't get to make that choice for our kids who do wear masks. Wearing a mask is for the public health and while our kids are in PUBLIC school, keeping everyone as healthy as possible should be the priority. History is full of situations where citizens were asked to do something for the common good. This is exactly that situation. As of today's NCDHHS dashboard, Johnston County has 29,236 active cases per 100,000 people. A look at the charting of positive cases show that the numbers fluctuate widely. There has been no leveling off and no consistent decline that would warrant the removal of the mask mandate.

Please keep the masks in place.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 16:50:55

NAME: Haley Russo

TOPIC: Concerns at Riverwood Elementary and area schools

COMMENTS: My name is Haley Russo. I would like to thank the School Board for allowing my comments to be heard during the public comment portion of this meeting.

My family and I live in Clayton and my youngest son was a student at Riverwood Elementary until just after the start of this school year. During the 2020-2021 School Year my son had 2 different virtual teachers and then another new teacher when he returned to the building for the last part of the year. Due to having multiple different teachers my son experienced huge gaps in his learning. When looking at his scores for the various State tests given during the year, it was obvious that my son was not where he needed to be to move on to the next grade. Unfortunately, because the school is maxed out with students, those students, like my son, who would benefit from repeating a grade are getting "pushed along." Pushing along these students makes learning increasingly difficult for them, as there is an order for learning in subjects like Math and ELA. How are students to be successful in their learning when the schools are physically unable to offer an option like repeating a grade level or providing a better way to deal with difficult situations so students get the necessary instruction to be successful? In my opinion the school failed to provide my son with a consistent education during a tremendously difficult situation.

With the rapidly increasing population in Johnston County when will new schools be built? The land developers are permitted to continue adding new houses, which adds more families and hence more students however there is nothing being done to address the schools being overrun with students. Adding mobile units to schools as a way to increase the schools space makes the schools more vulnerable to intruders who may want to cause harm within the schools. Those mobile units are placed in areas around the schools, specifically at the Riverwood Elementary and Middle Schools, that are easily accessible to the public. The recent addition of a locked "wall" at the entrance of those schools did nothing to prevent access to the school by an intruder. All it did was let them know they would need to go a different way to have access to the students and staff inside the school.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to learning how this Board will address my concerns.

TIMESTAMP: 9/14/2021 17:01:37

NAME: Tiffany Jentsch

TOPIC: Mask

COMMENTS: I would like to address the board in regard to the mask. We are fully vaccinated and still support the need for a mask. My daughter is a freshman at Clayton High. When the board had made the original decision to not mandate the mask, she was nervous and asked if it would still be ok to wear hers. When the board decided to change this decision and mandate it. She felt relief. I want her to be able to enjoy high school. My oldest daughter's senior year was terrible for her. She lost out on so much that year. I don't want this to be the case again. Please keep the mandate in place!