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December 9, 2021

Oregon Health Authority  
Rachael Banks, MPA  
Public Health Director  
500 Summer St. NE, E-20  
Salem, OR. 97301

Dear Ms. Banks,

As school board members of the Crook County School District, we strive to be responsive to the questions and issues that arise from families within our district. As such, we are writing to advocate on their behalf for the end of the mask mandate when the current temporary rule expires on February 8, 2022.

We have had widespread availability of Covid-19 vaccines for those over age 12 and by the time the current mandate expires, we will have had just over three months of availability of the vaccine for ALL school-aged children. This is ample time to allow for families to choose the level of protection they are comfortable with before the mask mandate expires. The current expiration date would also allow for recovery time after inevitable surges in cases after the holidays.

Crook County School District is ready and able to manage health and safety concerns for our students, in partnership with our local health department. We have knowledgeable leaders who care about our community. Regaining local control is imperative moving into 2022 and beyond.

If loosening restrictions for the whole state is not feasible, we at least ask that you consider a plan similar to that in Nevada, releasing all lesser populated areas from the same levels of restriction deemed necessary for the largest cities and school districts. The science seems to widely support that population density is a key factor in the spread of this disease, and we ask that it be considered in Oregon. Schools in our district have enrollment as low as 4 students and as high as <800 students. We have no large schools.

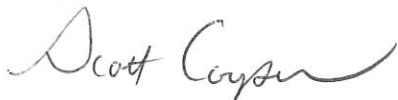
Regardless of the outcome, we believe Oregonians should be apprised of the metrics involved in decision making. For those of us in rural Oregon, east of the Cascades, information relevant to our demographics would be most appropriate and welcome. A large portion of our population values local, if not personal,

control over their own level of tolerable health risk. We understand that Covid-19 and its variants will likely never go away entirely, and we are eager to return health choices to our community. Oregon is now in a small minority of states not allowing for local control over these decisions.

Thankfully and notably, the mortality rate from this disease since its appearance in Oregon for those 19 and younger continues to be 0.0%. We are pleased that Oregon is nearly to the 80% threshold on adult vaccination rate (and 70% for the whole population), and we hope that will be a key factor in decision making. Vaccination availability should remain a priority, but the time for mandated masking needs to come to an end.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



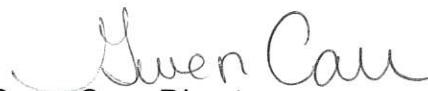
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