



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

February 10, 2022

President Clarence Crawford
Maryland State Board of Education
Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building
200 W. Baltimore St
Baltimore, MD 21201-2595

Dear President Crawford and Board Members,

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for all Marylanders, but it has been perhaps most difficult and disruptive for our children. We have seen the harmful effects of prolonged school closures on the education, health, and emotional well-being of Maryland students. The consequences include failing grades, regressed social development, and increased mental health challenges. If these trends are not reversed quickly, we face the unthinkable prospect of a generation left behind, both academically and socially.

Since ending the state's indoor mask mandate in May 2021, our focus has been on encouraging people to take appropriate precautions. In recent weeks, Maryland emerged from the Omicron wave faster than just about any other state. We continue to report substantial declines in all of our key COVID-19 health metrics, including the lowest case rate in the country. Maryland also continues to be one of the most vaccinated states, including vaccinating school age children at a rate above the national average.

I applaud you for your efforts to support in-person instruction and your emphasis on social-emotional health. Now, it is critical to move toward normalcy for students and families by rescinding the school masking policy that was adopted by the State Board of Education in Dec. 2021, and enacted by the Maryland General Assembly's Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review Committee (AELR). We must all learn to live with this virus, not in fear of it.

A growing number of medical professionals, parents, and bipartisan state officials throughout the nation are calling for an end to school mask requirements. Public health experts who previously advocated for mandated masking in schools now call for eliminating these temporary measures.

Dr. Leana Wen, former Baltimore City Health Commissioner, stated this week: “As long as vaccines and boosters continue to protect well among the vaccinated and as long as hospitals are not overwhelmed, restrictions should all be lifted.”

Last month, you stated the State Board of Education would continue reviewing current COVID-19 metrics to assess the need for the continuation of the school mask regulation. In light of dramatic improvements to our health metrics and the widespread availability of vaccines, I am calling on you to take action to rescind this policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Larry Hogan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" and the last name "Hogan" clearly distinguishable.

Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: Senate President Bill Ferguson
House Speaker Adrienne Jones
Mohammed Choudhury, State Superintendent of Schools