



WANTAGH UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

December 19, 2022

The Honorable Kathleen Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

We are taking this opportunity to share information from the Wantagh School District about discussions to reinstate universal masking mandates and pending legislation regarding vaccine mandates for New York State public school students. As we emerge from the pandemic, we have learned the tremendous value of daily in-person instruction for our students. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in learning loss and mental health concerns for students across our nation. Fortunately, the Wantagh School District has been able to keep our schools open throughout the pandemic to help mitigate some of the effects COVID-19 had on our students in comparison to other regions.

Recently, we have become aware of discussions taking place that New York State plans to enact universal masking again in our schools. In fact, masking was a discussion item on the December 8, 2022, New York State Public Health and Health Planning Council agenda. We have been operating well since the mask mandate was lifted and implore you to continue to allow us to have the autonomy to do so.

In addition, the CDC added the COVID-19 vaccine to its schedule of recommended childhood vaccines and there is legislation in committees in the NYS Assembly (Bill A8378) and NYS Senate (Bill S7320) that would mandate the COVID vaccine for NYS public school students.

The Wantagh School District is writing to share that members of our community have communicated strong views on these matters. Universal masking and the potential for vaccine mandates created significant turmoil and animosity in our community throughout the pandemic. A COVID-19 vaccine mandate would result in some of our families having to make an extremely difficult decision to either surrender to a mandate or disenroll their children from public school and begin homeschooling. It is our intention and hope to refrain from creating additional conflict on these matters and remain focused on the educational success of our students.

At this time, please allow families to make decisions on these consequential matters. We urge you to seek out the perspectives of your constituents to gain insight prior to making decisions on universal masking and vaccine legislation that would have such a significant impact on students across New York State.

Sincerely,

Laura Reich

Board of Education President

Anthony Greco

Board of Education Trustee

Tara Cassidy

Board of Education Vice-President

Jennifer Perfetti

Board of Education Trustee

Adam Fisher

Board of Education Trustee

John C. McNamara

Superintendent of Schools

Cc: New York State Assemblyman David McDonough
New York State Senator Elect Steven Rhoads