

October 10, 2021

Leelanau County Board of Commissioners:

Historically, the BOC has supported our Board of Health, in the past year commending the Health Department for its efforts to prevent disease and death in Leelanau County. Through Health Department efforts and the informed judgment of over 76% of Leelanau County residents, our piece of heaven leads the state in vaccination rates. Reasonably, we must rely on knowledgeable professionals for guidance during a local health crisis. I am not a physician and will not presume to have more knowledge of contagious disease than those charged with protecting the public from health threats. I am an educator; we know the social and educational value to in-person instruction and should take every practical precaution to preserve a safe educational environment. Our Health Department has wisely mandated the simple adorning of a mask, a proven method to mitigate the spread of disease. Masking has and will preserve our children's freedom to have in person instruction. Michigan's leading research universities have all mandated vaccines and masking for in person instruction. These institutions have faculty who have dedicated their professional careers to studying disease; if wise, we will follow their example. The overwhelming majority of residents in our county have listened to the physicians and health experts and gotten vaccinated. Our children under 12 do not have that option.

Every school has a dress code. Setting a "dress code" for the health and safety of the entire school population (and the extended families they share time with) is not an infringement on an individual's rights. Virtually everybody can tolerate wearing a mask for a school day. My preschool granddaughter does so without complaint. My daughter-in-law pediatrician treats children hospitalized with COVID; these poor kids are masked 24 hours if not on a ventilator.

The notion that a spurious libertarian position regarding masking may threaten funding of OUR Health Department for making the informed decision to protect our children, their quality of education, and our community is an ill informed, politically narrow and self-serving threat and not in the service of our children or community.

I am grateful our Board of Health has the courage and wisdom to protect the healthy well-being of the most vulnerable (especially those unvaccinated under age 12) members of our community. I hope the Board of Commissioners fully supports OUR Health Department.

Sincerely,
Dean Manikas
Maple City