

February 15, 2022

Hon. Jay Inslee
Governor, State of Washington
Olympia, WA 98501

Dr. Umar Shah
Washington State Dept. of Health
Olympia, WA 98501

Hon. Chris Reykdal
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Governor Inslee, Dr. Shah and Supt. Reykdal:

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to keeping all Washingtonians safe as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. We are writing on behalf of districts in the NEWESD 101 region to encourage you to take immediate action toward substantial relaxation of the current school district student safety protocols. At a minimum we request your consideration of the following:

1. **First and foremost, end the mandatory mask mandate.**
2. **Contact tracing responsibilities should be moved to the Department of health rather than school districts.**

Now in the last half of the 2021-22 school year, we believe there is urgent need to address our students' social and emotional well-being, as well as our school district staff's fatigue with implementing the burdensome protocols, as the parents and families of our students have grown increasingly weary, and vocally critical of them. As you know well, unlike at the beginning of this long journey, everyone over age 5 now has access to vaccination if they choose, and access to COVID test opportunities has significantly expanded.

It is evident that the pandemic has taken an exceptional psychological and social toll on our entire communities. We are particularly concerned that the mental health of our students, their families, and our staff is such that relief from the restrictions we have strived to follow with fidelity, is needed. As other states are now lifting many pandemic restrictions, the pressure has built that we do the same.

Again, we strongly encourage that action is taken to ease these restrictions, and we thank you in advance for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

The undersigned superintendents of school districts in the NEWESD 101 Region

Mr. Mick Miller and Mr. Cassidy Probert/Benge
Mr. Rob Roettger/Cheney
Mr. Jason Perrins/Chewelah
Mr. Jerry Pugh/Colfax
Mr. Greg Price/Columbia
Mr. Steve Fisk/Colville
Mr. Chuck Wyborne/Wilbur-Creston
Dr. John Glenewinkel/Curlew
Mr. Don Hawpe/Cusick
Mr. Jim Kowalkowski/Davenport
Mr. Travis Hanson/Deer Park
Mr. Brian Talbott/East Valley
Ms. Suzanne Schmick/St. John-Endicott
Mr. Bill Glidewell/Evergreen
Dr. Randy Russell/Freeman
Mr. Zane Wells/Garfield
Mr. Michael Dougherty and Mr. Derek Duchesne/
Gonzaga Preparatory School
Mr. Brett Baum/Great Northern & Rosalia
Mr. Wayne Massie/Harrington
Mr. Michael Olsen/Kettle Falls
Mr. Doug Curtis/LaCrosse
Mr. Charles Pierce/Lamont
Mr. Jerrad Jeske/Liberty
Mr. Don Vanderholm/Lind-Ritzville

Mr. Brad Van Dyne/Loon Lake
Mr. Todd Spear/Mary Walker
Mr. Shawn Woodward/Mead
Mr. Tim Ames/Medical Lake
Dr. Dave Smith/Newport
Mr. Jeff Baerwald/Nine Mile Falls
Dr. Jake Dingman/Oakesdale
Mr. Dan Read/Odessa
Ms. Suzanne Savall/Orchard Prairie
Ms. Brenda McDonald/Pride Schools
Ms. Sherry Cowbrough/Orient
Mr. Mike Jones/Palouse
Mr. Eric Sobotta/Reardan-Edwall
Mr. Kevin Young/Republic
Dr. Ken Russell/Riverside
Ms. Nancy Lotze/Selkirk
Mr. Travis Franklin/Spokane International Academy
Mr. Bill Ressel/Sprague
Mr. Eric Patton/Steptoe
Ms. Kristina Allen/Summit Valley
Mr. John Cordell/Tekoa
Mr. Ben Ferney/Valley
Dr. Rob Clark/Washtucna
Mr. John Adkins/Wellpinit
Dr. Michael Dunn/NEWESD 101