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Dr. Dwight Bonk · Superintendent of Schools  
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June 7, 2021

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Many school districts including Wappingers received a document indicating the position from the NYS Department of Health and the Governor's Office that would make the usage of masks optional in schools effective Monday, June 7th.

Based on this information, the Wappingers CSD sent out notification indicating such for Monday, June 7th. Shortly after 2pm on Sunday we received documentation from NYSED indicating that districts are to follow the original guidance on wearing masks that was in place prior to the Friday memo. Needless to say, this has created a considerable amount of confusion and consternation for students, parents, and staff within our District.

The Wappingers Central School District is the 9th largest school district in NYS with well over 10,000 students who attend school in 15 different buildings. Many of the buildings were built prior to 1968 and do not have air conditioning in classrooms, common areas, gymnasiums, or cafeterias. The requirement to wear a mask has contributed to health issues for those students and staff who have respiratory issues, asthmatic conditions, and other heat sensitivity ailments. We have had cases where this has occurred, impacting both students and staff, over the past couple of weeks. In the interest of the health and safety of our staff and students and the requirement to continue to wear masks, the District felt it was necessary to call a remote learning day, today, Monday June 7, as the heat index is forecast to be close to 100 degrees. I am hopeful that the NYS Department of Health understands the gravity of this decision as our district is in Dutchess County and our COVID positivity rates are extremely low.

Moving forward, I would ask that the decisions regarding mask usage be left up to the local communities in consultation with their county health department. This will enable local communities to develop proper standards for mask usage to ensure the health and safety of students and staff are not compromised any further because of the hot and humid conditions that typically occur in the month of June.

Thank you very much for taking the time to review this correspondence.

Dr. Dwight Bonk



Superintendent of Schools

Cc: Ms. Didi Barrett, State Assembly  
Mr. Jonathan Jacobson, State Assembly  
Mr. Kieran Lalor, State Assembly  
Mr. Marcus Molinaro, Dutchess County Executive  
Ms. Susan Serino, State Senator  
Dr. Anil Vaidian, Dutchess County Commissioner of Health  
Dr. Howard A. Zucker, State Commissioner of Health