

August 9, 2021

Dear Rocky Hanna,

We greatly appreciate your leadership regarding the education and safety of the children in our community, especially in the past 18 months of this Pandemic. We recognize that many decisions must be made for the coming school year, and that masking of students has become the controversial topic of many discussions.

There have been numerous challenges created by the Covid-19 virus throughout the world. The responses to these challenges have been remarkable, both worldwide and in our local community. These have included mass testing, fine tuning of treatment modalities, development and distribution of an efficacious vaccine, and best methods of preventing further spread. There has been overwhelming evidence to support that wearing masks greatly reduces the risk of transmission of Covid 19. Mask wearing has been recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for children 2 and older.

In the past several months, Florida has seen a significant increase in children being hospitalized across the state with Covid-19 and its' complications such as Multi System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C). A number of these children have required admission to the Intensive Care Unit. There is no reason to suspect that this trend will spare the children in our community, especially given the significant increase in the positivity rate for Covid in Leon and surrounding counties. Reasonable efforts to reduce the spread of the virus among our children is of paramount importance.

As pediatricians, we now find ourselves examining what has been learned over the past 18 months and adding that to our training and experience to make the best decisions and recommendations regarding the overall well-being of children in our community. Having students return to school is important not only for the educational benefits, but also for their mental health and social well-being. Optimizing safety and taking reasonable measures such as wearing a mask while students return to the classroom should be the goal. In accordance with the AAP, we strongly recommend that your mitigation plan include masking of Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Truman, MD

Undersigned also in support of the above recommendation-

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