



PUBLIC COMMENT: 8/4 Meeting

1 message

'John H' via School Board Members <school_board_members@lists.staffordschools.net>

Mon, Aug 2, 2021 at 6:32 PM

Reply-To: John H [REDACTED]
To: school_board_members@lists.staffordschools.net

Hello School Board,

I would like to officially submit emailed comments to the School Board on Action Item 4.02 for the August 4th Special Meeting. Thank you! Here is my comment:

Dr. Kizner, and School Board,

Good evening. My name is John Hatzis. I am a rising junior at [REDACTED], and live in the Rock Hill District.

I would like to start by thanking all of you for your hard work this past year, and congratulate Dr. Kizner on his retirement. Running a School District must be a taxing position, but the benefits are certainly tangible. I hope the School Board will be transparent and responsive to parents and students during the search for a replacement.

I come up here today to share the mask policy for the Summer Residential Governor's School for the Humanities at Radford University, and urge Stafford Schools to adopt a similar mask policy as the Governor's School. You know, I didn't want to include any scientific or empirical data on masks, I know you are probably overwhelmed with sources, and I feel you will find this relevant example useful in drafting your revised policy.

From June 27th to July 24th, I had the honor of attending the Governor's School for the Humanities. The experience was certainly enlightening, and while I made many friends and had a great time, there are multiple truly jarring examples of school-sanctioned Critical Race Theory, Anti-Christian bigotry, and extreme political bias in both my teachers remarks and the curriculum itself. It really opened my eyes to the need for decisive action to prevent this more radical form of indoctrination from entering Stafford Schools, if it isn't here already. But perhaps the most jarring part of my Governor's School experience was the near complete return to normalcy. My experience seemed surreal, in that it was the first time I had gathered, like normal, with large groups of people.

Part of the reason the experience felt so surreal was the program's mask policy. The rule, in practice, did not require masks for anyone, unless in close congregations of over 50 people indoors. This means we eat, lounge, travel to class, participate in class, and do activities while not wearing masks. I can count with my two hands the number of times in that entire month I wore a mask, and those were only in very condensed situations. Mask-wearing by others in non-required situations were rare, and yet there was no spread of the coronavirus during my time there. Not only that, but students of all political and ideological beliefs attended without objecting to the lax mask policy. This makes me feel the belief we shouldn't go mask-optional because it will anger liberal parents isn't true.

Now, my experience poses a pretty obvious question: if a residential Governor's School, filled with public school students, can pull off a near-totally normal experience without a COVID outbreak, why can't Stafford County?

Of course, there are a few differences in this comparison. Firstly, a large number of students at the program were vaccinated, myself included. But vaccinations continue to trend upwards, this seems to be a self-solving problem, and that's not to mention the many other COVID mitigation's in place in Stafford School's. A second difference is the only students who attended were of eligible age for the vaccine. But this also seems like a self-solving issue, as I'm sure I don't need to inform you of the virus's near non-existent threat to the very young. Another thing to note is while mask-wearing was rare among Governor's School students, I am sure it would be much more common in the fall even if it is not required by the county.

The only hitch, ironically enough, in the mask rules was the spread of a minor bug throughout Governor's School, which had many students feeling down for about a day or so, then going back to normal. This was largely because for



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everyone there, this was the most normal experience they've had since before the pandemic. It is only common sense that after being locked away and masked up for so long, that there would be minor bugs spreading around. In fact, the existence of the bugs is further proof that we need to return to normal, because especially for young people, an immune system that is not adjusted to everyday life is a very bad thing. That shouldn't be a controversial statement, it is absolutely true that children not being allowed to live their life is bad for them in many ways. It would be reckless and wrong to keep children masked in the situation we are in.

Going mask-optional should be a commonsense decision, considering where the rest of the state is at right now. The State of Virginia met our vaccination goal weeks ago, and the number of shots given are still rising every day. With no coronavirus restrictions in place, and the state of emergency expired, adults have gone back to normal. Why shouldn't children, who both benefit the most from normalcy and are least affected by the virus, do the same?

I hope you found my experience helpful in your decision. Thank you.