August 10, 2021

Dear Dr. Christakis:

We are pleased to submit for your consideration an Original Investigation: **“SARS-CoV-2 testing strategies to contain school-associated transmission: model-based analysis of impact and cost of diagnostic testing, screening, and surveillance.”**

Schools are currently making plans for the 2021-22 school year after historic educational disruptions and amidst uncertainty about the pandemic’s trajectory during the coming months. Although the federal government has allocated $10 billion for COVID-19 testing in schools, schools require guidance on how to best allocate resources toward different testing objectives at different levels of community risk. We examine the costs and benefits of expanded diagnostic testing (“test to stay”), screening, and surveillance. Using a previously published agent-based model of COVID-19 transmission in schools (benchmarked against empirically observed incidence and adapted for the delta variant), we evaluate strategies across a wide range of community incidence. We emphasize that testing costs are far lower than costs associated with loss of in-person education time and that schools should use COVID-19 testing to facilitate in-person education, adapting as needed to change in local COVID-19 risk.

We believe that this work informs a pressing policy issue and would complement the *JAMA Pediatrics*’s work mitigating harms faced by children during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have included in our study the relevant components required by the CHEERS checklist. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response.

Best regards,

Alyssa Bilinski, PhD

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Department of Health Services, Policy and Practice | Department of Biostatistics

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