



August 13, 2021

Dear Superintendent Smith,

On Thursday, August 12, 2021, Tri-County Health Department's (TCHD) Board of Health convened for their regularly-scheduled, monthly meeting. As I have done since March 2020, I provided a COVID-19 update to the Board, a segment of which was focused on masking in schools. In summary, I conveyed to them, as I have to you directly, that I felt that conditions in schools are presently not safe for unvaccinated children, particularly those below 12 years of age who are not currently eligible for vaccination without required universal masking, due to the following information:

- Transmission of COVID-19, exacerbated by the more transmissible Delta Variant, is highly likely in the school setting without high levels of mask wearing.
- Transmission in this setting would pose considerable risk, including:
  - Risk to the health of children, especially those not yet eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
  - Risk of transmission to family and friends outside of the school setting, especially for those at higher risk of complications from COVID-19.
  - Risk of interference with in-person learning due to isolation of positive cases and quarantine of children exposed in outbreak situations. This is particularly important toward our shared goal of maintaining a high-level of in-person learning with its positive impact on education, mental health, and social-emotional development of our children.

In response, TCHD's Board has asked to hold a public comment meeting to discuss whether a public health order requiring masking in schools should be issued by TCHD. This public comment meeting has been scheduled for **Monday, August 16, 2021 at 4:00 PM**.

We are reaching out to ensure you are aware of the information provided to the Board and this meeting as decisions following public comment may have implications for your school community.

We would also encourage you to explore all options you can within your school context as soon as possible to optimize high-rates of mask wearing, particularly in settings in which children under 12 are present.

Please see the public comment meeting announcement for more information on meeting logistics and how you and your community can weigh in. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Douglas, Jr., MD".

John M. Douglas, Jr., MD  
Executive Director

