

Chris Taggart

From: Willi Prince <willi_mason@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 27, 2020 8:43 PM
To: Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Masks

Hello, I am writing to you about the mask mandate and how as a teacher it is effecting our youth and ultimately our economy in the Bitterroot Valley.

I became a teacher to inspire young people, to help them discover their path, and to watch them become caring, compassionate young adults. Teachers in the era of COVID have become frontline workers: disinfecting, reminding young people to wear their masks, and doing health screenings twice a day. We are feeling the pressures of this pandemic on our hearts. We are reminding children to play differently, eat differently, and enforce impressive hygiene skills.

Our schools are suffering right now. Many have had to move to remote learning for 3-14 day stretches. Staff are getting sick, children are getting sick, and we are working so hard to keep everyone safe and healthy, but then we go out into the community to buy groceries or run errands and the people who are not wearing masks are out numbering those of us who do wear them. It is frustrating to be following guidelines set by our governor, the CDC, and the general scientific body, but see our community unsupportive in our efforts. We are trying to impress upon students the importance of wearing a mask, but they see the majority of our community ignoring guidelines and mocking them. How do we impress upon our young people the importance of caring for one another, when adults in our community can't wear a mask when they are out in public? Schools have reported online bullying due to students testing positive with COVID. The meanness and callousness of it is heartbreaking.

Kids come to school visibly anxious, twitching and angry outbursts are some of the side effects of the pandemic. Students ask questions about what happens when school goes remote, and they tell me stories about helping younger siblings do their homework while parents are at work, while also trying to do chores, homework and go to their jobs. They worry about getting enough food, what it means for their parents if they have to take off work, what happens if they expose their grandparents, siblings, or friends? They look to the adults as role models and they are watching us bicker over a simple task that at best will prevent transmission of the illness by 90% and at worst we look silly wearing masks for a while.

Kids have lost so much...competitions, festivals, all-state honors, concerts, trips, parties, the list goes on. We need to pull ourselves together as adults and do what is right. Every time a school gets shutdown, we pull parents out of the workforce. It stresses parent's checkbooks, local businesses lose workers, and institutions like the hospitals and grocery stores will not be able to function at the capacity we need them to.

Please rethink your stance on enforcing masks. Thank you for your time.

Willi

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is

safe. If you believe the email to be malicious and/or phishing email, please use the **Phish Alert** button.