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Summary of main points for the issue/ concern:

Reinstate Mask Mandate in OCDSB Schools

I am a parent of two children who attend OCDSB schools. There is an urgent need to reinstate a mask requirement for the remainder of the academic year. And this is because OCDSB classrooms have not been made safe to be inside unmasked. They can be made safe through engineered solutions, but that will not happen overnight.

Our communities are undergoing parallel epidemics. There are epidemics of acute, contagious illness, which have collapsed our healthcare systems for several months. The collapse of acute pediatric healthcare systems, which is more recent, is what has prompted this meeting.

There is also an epidemic of chronic illness and disability, including in our children, through the long-term consequences of COVID-19 infection, even in mild cases, with between a 5-20% chance of long COVID per infection. This is a wide variety of long-term symptoms, such as difficulties with thinking, an inability to tolerate exercise, and chronic fatigue. As it is easy to be reinfected with the virus, all residents of Ottawa will continue to be at risk for long-term disability.

It is unethical and deleterious to learning to require that children and their families risk life-altering long-term disability as the price of admission to public school.

To avoid the need for a mask requirement in the future, indoor public spaces - such as schools - need to further upgrade indoor air quality infrastructure.

In the middle of the 19th century, engineers raised the base ground level of all buildings across downtown Chicago, Illinois. This was done to eliminate the spread of water-borne epidemic viruses, such as cholera. Engineers have also developed technologies that rapidly destroy airborne viruses. One is Upper Room Ultraviolet

Germicidal Irradiation, used safely for decades. Another is far-Ultraviolet C irradiation. If OCDSB wants schools to be safe in the long-term, these solutions need to be installed. In the meantime, a mask requirement is urgently needed for safety.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue:

Implementation of a universal masking requirement in all OCDSB schools. Immediate exploration of the need to professionally install indoor air quality infrastructure upgrades, including UV irradiation, and monitoring equipment, including CO2 detectors in all classrooms. Only clean air will get us out of these health care crises for good.