

BOARD OF HEALTH COMMISSION
Special Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2022, 7:30 pm
Conducted Remotely

Board members present: Noel Chavez, Judy Carter, Abigail Silva, Suzanne Feeney, Jennifer Fritz, Wynne Lacey; Trustee liaison present: Susan Buchanan; Staff liaisons present: Theresa Chapple-McGruder, Sara Semelka, Cindy Hansen

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Chavez at 7:32 pm.

Agenda Approval: A motion carried to approve the agenda as presented.

Public Comment: Public comments are attached at the end of these minutes.

New Business:

Letter to Pediatric Providers. Dr. Chapple wishes to send a letter to pediatric providers regarding COVID-19 vaccines once they become available for children ages zero to four, asking providers to vaccinate this group and letting them know the health department will not be hosting any clinics. We are also reaching out to federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) to make sure they can vaccinate children without a provider. The Board voted and the motion carried to co-sign the letter with Dr. Chapple.

Review Metrics for Ending COVID-19 Mitigations. Dr. Chapple clarified this meeting is to discuss the mask mandate and vaccination requirements in Oak Park, not school or daycare mitigations. She has been working closely with daycares to discuss mitigations and an order will be posted for the community.

Because the Omicron surge is dissipating, Chicago, Cook County, the state, and Oak Park are removing the vaccination requirement as of February 28. We would like to discuss the metrics to determine when to remove the mask mandate.

The five metrics we have in place are vaccination rates, case counts, positivity rates, hospital admissions, and ICU bed rates. The state said we are removing our mask mandate on February 28, though the CDC said now is not the time to be removing mask mandates. In July, the CDC said communities with high COVID transmission rates should be masking. Oak Park's COVID transmission rates are still high.

Chicago and Cook County said if their metrics continue to fall, they anticipate dropping their masks mandates by February 28. We are looking at not just having the metrics fall, but also having sustained that lower rate for one full transmission cycle of 14 days.

Chicago and Cook County are looking at four metrics and said that if three of the four meet lower rates, they'll reduce. We have always looked at all five metrics and have wanted all five to decrease before removing masks. We want to discuss whether we

continue to watch all five metrics hit the targets and maintain for 14 days, or if we should decide that reaching four of the five metrics is good enough if they maintain for 14 days.

Ms. Lacey said she knows there's a big discussion around people admitted to hospitals with COVID and for COVID, meaning they came in with a broken leg and tested positive but they weren't there for COVID. Dr. Chapple responded that is a long-term research question, not one for looking at snapshot data for mitigation. A person could fall and break their leg from trouble breathing because of COVID. The numbers we have been comparing all along are people in the hospital who have COVID. To shift to a different number without having that retrospective data study would not be appropriate.

Ms. Lacey asked Dr. Chapple how she feels about people choosing to mask and said the CDC is looking at that as a viable option. Dr. Chapple responded that the CDC has not yet made a full recommendation on that. She wants to focus on the CDC's recommendations to date and discuss when we want to make the move going forward.

We have met two of our five metrics. One is test positivity rates, which doesn't hold as much weight now that many people are testing at home. Another metric is vaccination rates, with 75% vaccinated in the community. We are close to meeting hospitalization and ICU beds and we are far off on community transmission rates. Last week was 135 cases and we need to get to 30 cases to be at moderate or low spread.

Dr. Feeney asked for clarification on what the mask mandate includes. Dr. Chapple responded that the mask mandate is indoors only and excludes hospitals, public transportation, schools, daycares, long-term care facilities, shelters, and jails.

Ms. Lacey said she doesn't understand why schools would have a mask mandate as these are our healthiest kids and asked for the difference between schools and a party. Dr. Chapple responded that people generally aren't at parties for 7-8 hours a day like they are in schools. Additionally, the CDC and AAP have both said that in order to help schools remain open, masking is a key mitigation we need to have in place.

The CDC did a study and found that in a school that had masks optional, they had school spread and ended up closing the school. We're following the CDC and AAP and it's their job to conduct studies and let us know at what rate it is safe to remove masks. They're saying that is not where we are right now and masks should stay on at schools.

Ms. Lacey said the nation is not following the CDC and most states are not masking kids anymore. Ms. Fritz knows some teachers and staff are compromised and CDC guidelines state that kids should be wearing masks if they're around those people. Dr. Chapple confirmed she meets with the schools at least weekly and they are following the mandate and are not discussing removing it. We will keep masks on because the governor mandates it and because the CDC and AAP say masks in schools will remain.

Ms. Lacey asked why Dr. Chapple can't allow people to not wear a mask if they don't want to. She asked if it's because we would lose funding. Dr. Chapple responded that

it's because it's not sound public health policy. She would like us to do what the community has asked us to do on this call, which is follow CDC guidance on masking.

CDC guidance is based off community transmission, which are the positivity rate and case count metrics. We use both metrics to determine if we are in high, substantial, moderate, or low community spread. Whichever is highest is the one that we use.

Dr. Carter said it seems clear the mask mandate should continue in Oak Park, but questioned the need to determine when to put masks back on now. Dr. Chavez said we should have a plan in place for both. Ms. Lacey said she votes for masks optional.

Dr. Chapple provided context by saying that one of the things masking does is help slow the spread. When we did the mask mandate in August, it took us three weeks longer to move from substantial to high spread compared to surrounding communities. In thinking about masking as prevention, she recommends we have a metric in place to prevent things from getting worse rather than putting masks back on when things are already bad and trying to roll it back. Dr. Carter thinks that sounds reasonable.

Dr. Silva doesn't know if it should be any two out of the five. She thinks it makes sense to look at case counts and positivity first, because then the other ones follow. Dr. Feeney agrees. Dr. Carter asked which metrics are most powerful. Dr. Chapple responded that in terms of prevention, Dr. Silva is correct in that we want to look at case counts and positivity rates. By the time we get to high hospitalizations and ICUs, we would have already had high case counts for some time.

Dr. Carter moved that if any two out of the five metrics become at substantial level, then the mask mandate should be reinstated. The motion was seconded and carried. Ms. Lacey recommended mask optional again. Dr. Chapple said the CDC recommends the two metrics—test positivity and case counts. If we go with the CDC, then we would use those two metrics to determine when masks go off and back on.

Dr. Chavez asked if there was any problem with setting it at any two of the five metrics. Dr. Chapple responded that she is prepared to follow the board. If we went solely on case counts and positivity, then we would stick with case counts and keep our masks on until our case counts went down to moderate or low and we would put masks back on if case counts went up to substantial or high.

The board voted. For basing it on any two metrics, one board member was in favor and three were opposed. For basing it on the two specific metrics recommended by the CDC—case counts and positivity—three board members were in favor and one was opposed. Ms. Lacey was confused and did not think she should vote. She thinks things should be optional at this point and drop the mandates.

Adjourn. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.

Next meeting: Tuesday, February 22, 2022, 7:30 pm

Public Comments:

Michael Johnson: We urge Oak Park to follow the CDC and Illinois Department of Health/DCFS in reducing the quarantine time from 10 days to five days for children in daycare who are close contacts of a COVID-19 case. These mask-wearing children, aged two to four, are unfortunately ineligible for vaccines. Yet vaccines are not necessary to reduce the time from 10 days to five days according to the CDC and Illinois Department of Public Health. In making the change from 10 days to five days, the CDC recognized that the science is evolving and that Omicron has a shorter incubation period than previous variants. The CDC emphasized that the updated recommendations also facilitate individuals' social and well-being needs, return to work, and maintenance of critical infrastructure, and that guidance was accepted by Illinois in January. Nonetheless, the Oak Park Department of Public Health persists in requiring a 10-day quarantine. Oak Park's response is short sighted in that it fails to recognize the reduction in incubation periods from previous variants to Omicron and ignores the individual, social, mental health, and well-being needs of both parents and children who must return to work or return to preschool. It also ignores the significant financial consequences imposed on families who must keep healthy children home between days six and 10 while also struggling to maintain full time employment. Finally, Oak Park's requirement overlooks the importance of testing and makes no exception for quarantining children to come back even though they test negative for COVID-19. Oak Park must change the requirement to be consistent with CDC and the Illinois Department of Public Health today or it should set up a fund for families to be reimbursed for the cost of daycare tuition and lost wages between days six and 10 of quarantine. Thank you.

Rich Fobes: Today's GCAR ruling in Springfield denied the Governor his continuation request for emergency rules as it relates to the COVID mitigation protocols that are implemented in schools. So at this point all these COVID mitigation protocols are suspended under the law. And so tomorrow we fully expect all schools to be mask optional and testing to be paused and all mitigation protocols that have come down from the Governor to be paused at this time because of this. Over 560 school districts have now gone mask-optional since the February 4th 2022 ruling, the TRO ruling by Judge Grischow. The majority of these school districts were not named plaintiffs. The ruling states that the Governor, ISBE, and IDPH do not have the legal authority to institute these mandates. These emergency orders have been declared null and void by the court. This was stated unequivocally in her ruling. Your continued mandates are in direct violation of this ruling and you may be held liable as a result. These mandates do not follow the science. They don't follow any science and they are harmful for our children. We all know our children are at very little risk for serious infection. It's past time for you to abandon these illegal mandates immediately. You have no other lawful option but to adhere to Judge Grischow's order and respect every child's right to due process before masking, exclusion, and testing can be required. You're seeing it all over the country. Mask mandates are going away, notably this past weekend districts [inaudible] went mask-optional. The village responded to a FOIA request that I put in asking the health department, your department to provide quote, any and all data, charts, clinical

studies, testimonies, evaluations, trials, recommendations, etcetera that you used in the decision regarding your vaccine passport mandate adopted January 10th, 2022. Your response was, quote, the Village has no records related to your inquiry, end quote. Dr. Chapple McGruder, you acknowledged the widely known fact that vaccines do not stop the spread of COVID-19. Therefore based on this and your reckless implementation of a vaccine passport in Oak Park, based on no data whatsoever, per your response, you must remove these discriminatory and harmful mandate immediately. Lastly, the idea that some of you feel that Wynne Lacey should resign or be removed from the board simply for refusing the vaccine for herself is an embarrassment to the community. Thank you.

Jill Stanchfield: Hello I'm a mother of two, one is age two and the other is four, both having daycare in Oak Park. Children under five who are not eligible for vaccinations continue to struggle through the pandemic. With no vaccination approved, their daily routines continue to change overnight. Young children consistently have to quarantine and do not understand why they can't go to school daycare. I'm asking the Board to adjust Oak Park quarantine requirements for those under five to follow the state and CDC guidelines as Michael mentioned. This means children could return to daycare with masks after being tested on day six rather than day 11. Parents are burnt out and trying to work and manage their little kids just to do it over and over and over again when another child test positive with Omicron in the class. We continue to spend hundreds of dollars on wasted daycare tuition in hopes it will end soon. Please give the parents and our young children some relief and follow state and CDC guidelines. We are hanging on by a thread.

Nora Powers: Good evening, everyone. First I'd like to say just a huge thank you to the Oak Park Health Department. I know you guys have done a lot to keep our community really safe through the pandemic. I mean I've loved living in a community and I'm a remote worker. I've been a remote worker for years in a community where there are vaccines held at the local level for all of our residents to access. I mean it really does take a village and I know a lot of people have volunteered their time and energy to make this possible, both at our local public works as well as at our local schools. And I know that the transmission rates within our community are definitely aligned with that and below that of surrounding communities, which hasn't come without many sacrifices from all of us. So I'm at this point a mom of four kids under eight who have endured multiple periods of remote learning as well as masks at school, at playgrounds, as well as within the homes of friends and neighbors. I've even coached youth soccer and softball and these amazing kids have run around with masks on their faces in the middle of summer and in the pouring rain. I'm happy to see how far we've come the past two years, but I will say I don't think that masks are without consequence among our youth. The time is now to move forward. It's time to lift all of our mask mandates. We should follow the lead of science and metrics as well as the communities around us and around the country and remove the mask mandates across the village including all of our schools, both public and private. With vaccines, symptom monitoring, and at-home tests in our back pockets, it's time to allow the people of Oak Park to make their own choices and bring the kids smiling back to our wonderful village. Thank you.

Kevin: My statement has to do with the main topic for tonight, ending COVID-19 mitigation, and specifically how mitigations apply to Fenwick High School. As members of the Fenwick and Oak Park communities, we have been diligently following the Village of Oak Park mandated COVID protocols. With recent court actions in our state coupled with a marked decrease in COVID cases, we find ourselves as the only Catholic high school in suburban Cook County that is required to wear masks due to the mandate of the village health department. And masking continues to have a material adverse effect on the mental and social and emotional health of our children. Further, Fenwick students are continually subjected to draconian COVID mitigations that their peers in other schools are not. I ask that following this meeting the health department respond in writing the following questions. What is the off ramp for the end of the pandemic mandates at Fenwick? What are the exact metrics that the Board of Health follows to eliminate masking and COVID protocols? How do the answers to the above compare to the guidance provided by the CDC and the ISBE? What specific authority does the Village of Oak Park Board of Health have over a private school such as Fenwick? And why does the Board of Health feel compelled to be involved in the day to day governance of this high school? I appreciate the consideration of these topics and am simply looking for transparency and a defined path to school environment without masks. Thank you.

Stephanie Harris: COVID is here to stay. I don't think that's news to anybody. Our community and significantly our children have experienced two years of disruption, isolation, and loss, which have led to profound mental health and emotional harms and financial devastation for many families and businesses. By all accounts, Oak Park is a huge success story on the vaccination front. The vast majority of our residents are vaccinated. Adults and children over age four have had ample opportunity to get vaccinated and boosted as appropriate. Moreover, our extremely high vaccination rates do not take into account the powerful natural immunity that's afforded those who have already had COVID. Significantly, CDC data shows that annual pediatric mortality from COVID is similar to that of the flu among unvaccinated children and it is nearly zero for vaccinated children. The aggressive mitigation efforts that Oak Park is requiring and/or recommending, including outdoor and indoor masking, masking in schools, excessive quarantining, and prophylactic testing of healthy and/or asymptomatic students are no longer necessary to protect this community. As such, they have diminishing returns. But these aggressive measures continue to have harmful consequences to both children and families alike, as evidenced by the national mental health emergency declared by the American Academy of Pediatrics late last year. The red flags that teachers have raised this year regarding profound student learning loss and emotional and behavioral challenges and the financial and professional devastation to working families and in particular women who are struggling to manage the practical and logistical realities of these mitigations. Health professionals and infectious disease experts are sounding the alarm that COVID mitigations have reached the tipping point, that the harms outweigh the benefits. This is particularly true in highly vaccinated communities like Oak Park. This is true even despite children under age five not being vaccinated in light of the extraordinarily low risks that COVID poses to young children. It is time for us to

recognize the extraordinarily low risks that our community faces and lift these mitigations. It's time to stop recommending the use of masks outdoors, to stop requiring the use of masks indoors, to stop requiring students, staff, and visitors to wear masks on school grounds. It is no longer 2020. It is time to acknowledge that vaccines make us safe.

Matthew Bogue: Similar to Michael Johnson's comments and Jill's comments, I'm a member of the Oak Park Montessori Daycare and we're reaching out asking, requesting that Oak Park adhere to the state of Illinois and CDC guidelines that have reduced the quarantine period. We're going on our second 10-day shutdown, it's putting our daycare in jeopardy of continuing to operate and there's, the reality is it's unavoidable for our children to avoid exposure and/or cases. The rest of the state of Illinois with large, including the Forest Park school that's part of our Oak Park, is adhering to the state and CDC rules. We're just requesting that you do the same or present the evidence that shows why we wouldn't be doing what the CDC and the rest of the state of Illinois is doing. We respectfully hope that you can make this consideration and work with us. It's putting us, as working families, the reason why we go to daycare is we have two working parents. We're back to pre-pandemic norms. Employers are expecting us to be in the workplace which creates more exposure. The company I worked for, Gallagher, a large Chicago-based company here today rolled out an email yesterday saying we were one of the first publicly-traded companies to come forward and require vaccination to be in the office. That has since changed as of February 28th. You no longer have to be vaccinated, you no longer have to wear a mask. So that's unavoidable for us. We're back in the workplace. We have to do the things we need to do. We have to have childcare and you're creating a scenario for the Oak Park directors and operators where they can't conduct their business and it's going to leave our community without a vital resource. I appreciate your time, thank you.

Craig Ziegler: Hi, I'm Craig Ziegler, I lived in the village going on 17 years. I just wanted to thank you all for your very hard work. There are clearly many different constituencies that public health is responsible for, including our youngest who are unvaccinated, the students, the teachers, the people that have businesses. That's a lot of headwinds that you have to deal with and I wouldn't want to be in anyone's shoes having to deal with all of that, but you're doing it with grace and it is greatly appreciated by many people in this village, including myself and my family. As someone who is dealing with the effects of long COVID in my own family of vaccinated and boosted people, it's not an easy situation. I've been at the funeral for my good friend's young daughter who died of COVID, and I just wanted to offer my appreciation. Thank you.

Jennifer Gorski: I am the parent of two District 97 students. My husband and I are also clinical child and adolescent psychologists. In anticipation of local planning, I would like to express my continued support of layered COVID-19 mitigations in District 97 schools. I hope that D97 continues to follow the guidance of public health professionals, including the Oak Park Department of Public Health, during this planning. Layered protections will continue to support the health, including mental health, of students, teachers, and staff. They will also help us sustain in-person learning during periods of

higher community spread. In addition to planning dial-down mitigation contingencies, I believe the district should realistically plan dial-up contingencies in preparation for future COVID-19 waves. As we already know, this is a dynamic long game of adaptation. In addition to ongoing vaccination efforts, there will be a continued yet fluctuating need for other key layers of protection to reduce the overall harm of the pandemic on our community and healthcare systems. Like many, I look forward to a time when community spread is lower, at which time it will be appropriate to dial down our mitigation plan. I am concerned about the cultural momentum to get back to what some refer to as normal when things are clearly not normal. Premature removal of mitigations will negatively impact vulnerable members of our community and their families, including those who face health disparities, the disability community, those who are immunocompromised, and those who have not yet had an opportunity to be vaccinated. That is not acceptable to me. I believe we can use the guidance of public health experts to make wise and strategic decisions around the next phases of our pandemic response. I look forward to those discussions. Thank you so much for your time and dedication.

Erin Mott. Good evening. Thank you for your time and service to our community. I'm writing to ask that the Oak Park Health Department please consider repealing the vaccine mandate for children under 18, effective immediately. As a fully vaccinated and boosted person who is in litigation with my ex-husband over the right to vaccinate our minor children, I believe in science but will likely not be given a court date before next fall based on Cook County's current volume of similar family court cases. In the interim, my children, who have absolutely no ability to make their own medical choices, are getting needless COVID-19 tests every 48 hours to allow them to continue to participate in activities. This is a waste of tests, given they do not meet any diagnostic criteria for testing, have no symptoms, no close contacts, and had COVID in late December, and therefore aren't even able to be tested for 90 days per D97 testing policy. And it causes intense stress, anxiety, and discomfort to my children without a meaningful benefit to public health, given how high our community's vaccination rate is. In addition, given that Cook County and Oak Park cannot speed up the judicial process for families like mine where I legally cannot violate a judgment preventing me from vaccinating my children, my children will likely have to continue to have hundreds of combined COVID tests between them without any symptoms, close contacts, or medical basis or criteria before I can legally vaccinate them, simply to comply with the overly conservative order. This truly does seem performative rather than medically based. I understand the intent of your vaccine mandate, but the fact that it doesn't allow for exemptions for children's activities that help keep kids healthy, prevent obesity, and improve mental health is not only unnecessary given our over 80% vaccination rate, it's against the values of our community as it clearly is singling out and punishing minors who can't legally make their own decisions for their medical care. I hope you take time to understand the likely inadvertent negative social and emotional impact and unnecessary discomfort and increasing avoidance behavior around all medical care that this mandate is causing. I'm constantly trying to balance pulling my kids out of activities because they don't want to get tested every 48 hours for months on end against just forcing them to do something we all know isn't medically necessary and that our surrounding communities don't

require. It pains me to have to look outside of Oak Park for camps, activities, and not to let my kids engage with our neighbors and friends from school, especially given how high [inaudible] community [inaudible] their own decision that seems unduly, unnecessarily cruel. Additionally, rather than motivating more to get vaccinated, I believe this mandate is actually fueling resistance and causing many to dismiss Oak Park's public health mandates. Given the negative impact of COVID currently tends to be the worst among the unvaccinated.

Robin Kalish: As a physician and parent in Oak Park, I am asking the Board of Health in the village to continue to follow best practices in this pandemic. We are still at high levels of community transmission and need to continue to follow the guidance of the OPHD, the CDC, and the AAP. We still have vulnerable people in our community, including children under five and others with underlying health conditions. We need to continue to encourage vaccinations for all who are eligible including boosters. We need to continue universal masking as recommended by all of the organizations above. We need to remain compassionate and continue to listen to our experts. PS - I would like to add to my comment that it is a myth that COVID is no more dangerous to kids than the flu. Even despite our mitigation efforts, far more children have died from COVID in the past two years, many of these in the past two months, than from the flu during any year in recent memory. From the CDC website regarding the flu, since flu deaths in children became nationally notifiable in 2004, reported flu deaths in children had previously ranged from a low of 37 during 2011-2012 to a high of 199 during 2019-2020. In contrast, over 1,200 children have now died of COVID in the last two years. Our mitigations are what have allowed all of our community's children to remain safely in school and activities, which as we know are important to their mental health. Some elementary schools still have 30% of their students unvaccinated and many have siblings at home who are too young to be vaccinated. Our mitigations continue to protect our students, teachers, staff, and their families. Please do not allow false information to persuade you otherwise. I would also like to add that I support all masking decisions of the health department. Masks are effective indoors as we know but also outdoors whenever possible or whenever people are in sustained close contact. I appreciate all of the hard work of the Board of Health and the OPHD to keep our community safe.

Meghan Paulas: We are fortunate to have a lot of tools at our disposal to keep our community safe, including the most vulnerable among us. I commend the health department's courage to keep advocating for each tool to be used as reasonable circumstances demand. Community spread remains high and the implementation of COVID protections should be responsive to community spread. We need to retain a layered approach. With the current wave of anti-mask, anti-vax, and anti-testing rhetoric picking up steam locally, what tools will our community be left with if we cower to the loudest and the angriest of the anti-voices now? Normal, for whatever that term means, is a lot different when one million of our fellow Americans have died. Thank you for your service.

Brynne Hovde: I'm sure we've heard from a number of voices already tonight. I want to go on record to say that whatever Gail Galivan said, I wholeheartedly disagree with it. Friends, you know better than any of us that this pandemic is still happening and that science doesn't care how much we wish it wasn't happening. I work in the diversity, equity, and inclusion field, and this type of cognitive dissonance is something we see often. We don't like the ugly truth so we rationalize and intellectualize why it can't be true, which, as we know, doesn't make it untrue. I am shocked and saddened by the dissonance happening across this community. Community safety is a priority. The crime is out of control, someone will be killed. Dozens of people in our village actually die of COVID-19. Crickets. It's the circle of life. We can't live in fear. Board of Health, I ask for two related but separate requests tonight. Please continue to stay strong in the face of this dissonance and continue with reasonable public health mitigations for our community in the midst of this pandemic. There are many folks in this community who rely on you all and support you in these decisions. Please reconsider whether Wynne Lacey is an appropriate member of this board. Again, I work in diversity, equity, and inclusion so I'm fairly aware of how actual discrimination and oppression show up. She is not entitled to a spot on our Board of Health and removing her would be accountability, not oppression, for her choices, choices she has full agency in and is entitled to make. I so appreciate the work of the Public Health Department and the service of those of you that are committed to keeping our community safe.

Adam Yaws: First and foremost, thank you to the OPHD for our very successful local vaccination drives. We've achieved a far higher vaccination rate for all people aged four plus than most of Chicagoland. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to really do much to reduce the mitigations and restrictions imposed upon the citizens and visitors of Oak Park. We have evidence that outdoor masking in non-socially distanced and crowded areas does not drive transmission in multiple scientific studies and anecdotal cases like last year's Lollapalooza. Yet we recommend everyone, including children in our schools, wear masks outdoors. This recommendation should be removed. With our high vaccination rates, we still require masks indoors in all scenarios, even restaurants and bars where people are routinely having conversations unmasked. The indoor mask requirement should follow the state's removal on 2/28. Chicago, Cook County, and Oak Park waited far too long to impose a vaccine mandate and have seen little to no impact or improvement in vaccination rates of an already highly vaccinated community. At this point it is performative instead of data-driven it should be eliminated. Oak Park Health Department has never posted plans or metrics around when and which mitigations should be removed or returned. This reduces clarity and planning ability for all stakeholders and leaves a frustrated and confused populace who spend significant resources taking business to other locales with fewer restrictions. We are more than two years into this pandemic and sufficient data exists to mitigate based on math and science. In conclusion, it is time to remove our vaccine mandate, remove the recommendation for outdoor masking, follow the state in removing the indoor mandate, and post a dashboard containing plans and metrics on when restrictions and mitigation should return.

Lauren and David Hyde: I am reaching out to you as a parent of a child in D97 and another child and an Oak Park daycare to request that you adhere to the updated guidelines from the Illinois Department of Public Health and DCFS dated January 31, 2022. Oak Park Health Department's unwillingness to adjust daycare quarantine guidelines to align with the CDC and IDPH unnecessarily and negatively impacts the families of this community. My son is now in his second 10-day quarantine in the last 23 days. During his first 10-day quarantine, we tested him three times, all negative. As we enter this second 10-day quarantine, we have already tested him once and plan to continue to do so. We are not unreasonable and are not going to put others at risk. We are simply asking that families in Oak Park be granted the same ability to quarantine five days and then return and mask for five, which is consistent with CDC and IDPH guidelines. It is also consistent with what Cook and DuPage County recommend. Not only does this unwillingness to align with the CDC and IDPH hurt families, it hurts our daycare businesses. As vaccines for this group have been pushed back, we are looking at months of possible 10-day quarantines. Our son thrives at school and as working parents we cannot continue to miss work at this rate. We have to seriously consider if daycare in Oak Park is the right option. It is unfair to Oak Park daycares that are trying to survive to have to compete with neighboring towns who are able to follow less strict guidelines. This policy is unsustainable and does not look at the additional negative consequences that it causes. Please do the right thing and shorten the quarantine as much as possible. Thank you.

Kim Jackewicz: Thank you for all the work you do. I would like to write in support of a nuanced equitable solution to pandemic mitigations. I hear a lot from the anti-vax crowd about how the pandemic is over. For many immune compromised or disabled people, with community transmission still very high, this could not be further from the truth. Dropping all mitigations will put these vulnerable folks directly in harm's way. Oak Park fancies itself as a progressive community full of kinds of people who take care of the most vulnerable. Without allowing the most vulnerable among us to have a voice, can we really say that's true? I have two points I hope will be considered. One, I would like to see the Board of Health center the disability community in any further discussion about mitigations, because as a group that has the most to lose, they deserve to have their voices heard. And number two, I would encourage the Board of Health to reconsider whether member Wynne Lacey, whose public statements follow no actual health or scientific principles and cause further harm to already marginalized communities, should have a voice in any of these discussions.

Jennifer Gorski: We need an equitable, strategic and forward thinking COVID-19 mitigation plan for Oak Park. By now we all agree that COVID-19 is here to stay. Therefore, we should continue to value and respect the guidance of public health experts as we craft a longer-term mitigation approach, a plan that goes beyond off-ramps, and includes continued vaccination outreach and dial-up mitigation contingencies. Like many, I look forward to a time of sustained low community spread and reduced mitigations. However, we are not there yet and there will be future waves. Reactionary or premature removal of key mitigations will disproportionately harm the most vulnerable members of our community. These are our friends and neighbors. We

have the tools to more successfully live with COVID-19. We can trust public health experts and accept community level responsibility while we also enjoy our lives.

Maria Pyra: As an infectious disease epidemiologist and a local parent, I am writing to ask the Board of Health to continue with data-driven layered protections in our schools and community. This pandemic has gone on far longer than we would all hope for. However, there is no data showing mental health in children is damaged by protections within schools. On the contrary, Dr. Tyler Black, an ER doctor and researcher with a focus on mental health, states the part that I keep going back to is likely the best way to protect our kids' mental health is to have less people dying of COVID. In addition, while over 1,200 children have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic began according to the CDC, only one child died of the flu last season, and to date five children have died this flu season. I look forward to a time when our rates are less than 10 cases per 100,000 as they were last June, when removing the protections can be done safely. Thank you for your time.

Audra Fullerton: During tonight's board meeting, I request that an official statement by the OPHD to clarify that one, the January 12th guidance rescinded the August 5th guidance, including outdoor mask recommendations and two, there are no outdoor masking recommendations including for playgrounds or schools. There seems to be confusion from D97 on this topic. Thank you.

Alec Ariano: The Oak Park Department of Public Health needs to update its COVID health policies to align with the updated CDC and Illinois Department of Health guidance in our community as soon as possible. The Village of Oak Park is behind the latest science and current guidelines around COVID by continuing to require daycare institutions to adhere to a 10-day quarantine for COVID cases and close contact COVID exposure. This is half of the five-day quarantine guidance that has been promoted by the CDC, Illinois Department of Health. This outdated policy is causing our children to unnecessarily be kept away from key educational programs and caregivers, it's putting undue strain on working parents, and it's creating confusion and strife in our community as we do not align to the new national or state standards that have been well publicized. I strongly support that our Village update our policies as soon as possible to align with the guidance from the CDC and Illinois Department of Public Health. I have always believed that our community should follow the science. I continue to think it is important to follow the science as it evolves and to evolve our public policy accordingly. This is a critical step in adapting our communities to safely living with the ongoing presence of COVID and one I encourage you to take as soon as possible. Thank you.

Luisa Long: I am Luisa Long, director of Oak Park Montessori School. And I would like to ask to adopt the Illinois Health Department and DCFS mandated time for quarantine, which is reduced to the five plus five days, at least for children who can be masked, which is two years and above. And I would also like to ask to provide written guidance so that we can have a better understanding of the regulations of the Village since they're different from the Illinois state. It has truly been very hard for parents and for us to continue with these long quarantines for the children. Thanks.

Ryann Ariano: I wanted to reach out to today to express my support for the Oak Park Department of Public Health updating our current COVID health policies to align with the updated CDC and Illinois Department of Health guidance in our community. I encourage you to make this change as soon as possible. It has come to my attention this week that Oak Park is lacing the science and current guidelines around COVID by continuing to require daycare institutions to adhere to a 10-day quarantine for COVID cases and close contact COVID exposure. This is substantially different than the five-day quarantine guidance that has been promoted by the CDC, Illinois Department of Public Health as well. This outdated policy is causing our children to unnecessarily be kept away from key educational programs and caregivers and is putting undue strain on working parents and is creating confusion and strife in our community as we do not align to the new national and state standards that have been well publicized. I strongly support that our village update our policies as soon as possible to align to the guidance from the CDC and the Illinois Department of Health. I have always believed our community should follow the science and I continue to think it's important to follow the science as it evolves and to evolve our public policy accordingly. This is a critical step in adapting our communities to safely living with the ongoing presence of COVID and one I encourage you to take as soon as possible. Thank you.

John Metzger: Since the onset of COVID-19, our county's response has been politicized. It is increasingly frustrating to find that a loud minority voices are sounding similar alarms in our supposedly enlightened community. While Oak Park does have a high rate of vaccination, Oak Park is not a bubble. We have people from outside our community who work and shop within our borders. And as we have seen throughout the current wave of COVID, it is important not only to be fully vaccinated, but also to have received a booster shot. Unfortunately, while COVID is not the flu, vaccine efficacy still wanes over time, much like the flu vaccine does. And with overall vaccination rates in the country, let alone booster rates, failing to come anywhere close to providing an adequate amount of overall protection to our population, it is important to continue to utilize other mitigation measures to keep the community safe and our healthcare system from collapsing. I'd like to commend the Oak Park Board of Health as well as our health director Dr. Chapple McGruder for guiding our community through these difficult times. However, there increasingly are calls from within our community demanding changes to our mitigation efforts. It is no secret that COVID has hit minority communities and impoverished communities much harder than wealthy segments of the population. These are the very people that we rely on every single day to make life appear as normal as it possibly can. We need to protect them. And we need to protect the vulnerable populations of our community whose immune systems are compromised and for whom a COVID infection would be devastating. While the current wave of COVID is in retreat, COVID itself is not gone. No one expects us to get to a COVID zero place, but we are still seeing high rates of transmission everywhere in the country. Current caseloads remain higher than at almost any other point since this began. And just a month ago, pediatric hospitalizations were at their highest point of the entire pandemic. Therefore I urge you to keep all of the current mitigation measures in place. Doing so

will protect our people and our economy as well as our education and healthcare systems. Resist the urge to weaken our protections so we can continue to thrive as a community. Thank you for your consideration and service.

Lisa Weiland: Many children aged two to four attend daycares and preschools in Oak Park. Daycare is a fact of life for many families that require two parents to be employed full-time to be able to live in this community. These children are unfortunately ineligible for vaccines but gladly wear masks. Unfortunately, the Oak Park Department of Public Health response to children that are close contacts of a COVID-19 case in daycare is causing unnecessary harm to these parents and children. Both the CDC and the Illinois Department of Health have reduced the quarantine time from 10 days to five days for these children who are determined to be close contacts of a COVID-19 case. These changes in guidance were based on changes in the science, recognizing that most infections will be found between days one in five. Despite that, the Oak Park Department of Public Health persists in requiring a 10-day quarantine. The 10-day quarantine applies even to children who are asymptomatic and test negative for COVID on day five or day six through 10 for that matter. Oak Park's decision to require 10 days of quarantine instead of the five days harms the children who are not sick and could otherwise return on day six, where they continue to be deprived of the rich educational opportunities at daycares. Oak Park's decision harms parents who lose time from work and risk losing their jobs. And Oak Park's decision harms the family as a whole when these stressors negatively affect our mental health. Accepting the CDC and Illinois DPH guidance is critical and the board should recommend that the Oak Park Department of Public Health accept that guidance today. Delaying the decision will only continue these harms. If Oak Park insists on requiring a 10-day quarantine, then it must also reimburse families for the time lost from work as well as the cost of tuition that are lost when healthy children are forced to stay home on days six through 10.

Rhetta Gibbs: I am seeking clarity on the topic of Oak Park schools and outdoor masking. I've heard from our D97 elementary school principal as recently as last week that outdoor masking is still being required by the OPHD. Alternatively, I've heard from community members that OPHD guidance on January 12th rescinded guidance from August 5th, including outdoor mask recommendations, meaning there are no outdoor masking recommendations, including for playgrounds or schools. Can you please confirm if this is true and/or sheds more light on the topic? If true, why is the D97 administration operating under notion that it is still required when new guidance was issued over a month ago? Thank you in advance for your insight.