



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE GREGORY S. HOWARD
FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

RANKING MEMBER

PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

MEMBER

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4200

300 CAPITOL AVENUE

HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591

CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700

November 15, 2021

Commissioner Dr. Juthani
410 Capital Ave
Hartford, CT 06106

Commissioner Russell-Tucker
450 Columbus Blvd.
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner, Juthani and Commissioner Russell-Tucker,

Thank you for considering my last correspondence regarding in-person learning for Connecticut students. I reviewed the updated guidance regarding “Options for Temporary Relief from Student and Staff Quarantines due to COVID-19 exposures in K-12 Schools.” In doing so, I noted that students identified as close contacts in the cafeteria should not participate in Screen and Stay.

From an epidemiological standpoint, one can understand that a greater risk of transmission exists while eating as opposed to sitting masked in a classroom. However, I think we can agree that there is a much greater risk of transmission during in-class instruction compared to full-distance learning. Even still, CT has appropriately weighed the risk of infection against the negative impact of lost education days and stalled social-emotional development concluding that in-class instruction is of lesser risk to our children.

As previously stated, data from our neighbors in Massachusetts supports a limited transmission in a school setting. Massachusetts students are permitted to participate in their Test and Stay models regardless of where in-school the exposure occurred. As of their most recent reporting (10/31/21), Massachusetts has conducted 86,236 “Test and Stay” tests yielding 85,504 negatives and 732 positives. The Massachusetts model allows potential exposures that occur in a cafeteria to participate in Test and Stay. Further, Massachusetts has no minimum distance requirements in the cafeteria or elsewhere, though they recommend 3 feet for students who are in the Test and Stay program.

These numbers overwhelmingly support the fact that in-school transmission is extremely low, especially when you consider that we do not know how many of the 732 positive tests were the result of an out-of-school contact and not due to an in-school transmission.

I, as well as parents across the State of Connecticut, recognize that COVID-19 is a virus that has taken far too many lives. However, we also recognize that mitigation efforts have impacted our children in enormous ways. Since the beginning of this school year, Massachusetts has not seen a significant increase in new confirmed cases or death rates. This, in conjunction with the aforementioned in-school COVID-19 data, leads me to believe that the risk of allowing cafeteria contacts to participate in our Screen and Stay program is low while the risk of continued loss of education and social-emotional development due to quarantining remains high. I know that balancing the spread of the virus and the impact of mitigation efforts is intricate however, here I believe the risk assessment is clear. I request that the Department of Health and the Department of Education extend the availability of Screen and Stay procedures to include cafeteria contacts during the regular school day.

Sincerely,



Greg Howard
State Representative, 43rd District

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