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Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools  
Twain Harte School District  
Vallecito Union School District

February 17, 2022

To: Members of the California State Legislature  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Brooks Allen, Executive Director, California State Board of Education  
Dr. Tomas Aragon, California State Public Health Officer  
Toni Atkins, Senate Pro Tempore, California State Senate  
Andreas Borgeas, California State Senator  
Senator Brian Dahle  
Frank Bigelow, California State Assembly Member  
Ben Chida, Governor’s Office  
Connie Leyva, California State Senator (Chair Education Committee)  
Patrick O’Donnell, California State Assembly Member (Chair Education Committee)  
Dr. Richard Pan, California State Senator  
Anthony Rendon, Speaker, California State Assembly  
Dr. Sohil Sud, California Department of Public Health  
Dr. Eric Sergienko, Interim Public Health Officer, Tuolumne County  
Dr. Rita Huspen Kerr, Amador County Public Health Officer  
Dr. Renee Ramirez, Calaveras Public Health Officer  
Dr. Richard Johnson, Alpine County Public Health Officer  
Tim Taylor, Small School District Association

*Re: COVID-19 Impact on Schools and the Shift from Pandemic to Endemic Response*

The twenty-one school districts in the counties of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne serve more than 14,000 children in TK-12 schools. Over the last two years, we have been working alongside local public health, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and other health professionals to respond to the global pandemic. The efforts of educators in these counties along with those across the state has been heroic. As we approach the two-year mark of the initial school closures in our counties (March 16, 2022), it has become critical that we must request a clear and immediate plan that permits schools to respond to the shift from a pandemic to an endemic.

The current health mitigation practices, strategies, and recommendations have forced schools to spend a tremendous number of resources and time meeting these requirements. This comes at the expense of efforts toward education and support services. Some examples include:

- ✓ A superintendent spends the majority of their day mitigating COVID-19 protocols rather than leading educational initiatives to benefit students.
- ✓ Students are losing more academic time due to COVID-19 testing, isolation, and quarantine rather than spending time in class.

- ✓ Principals are contact tracing and entering data into cumbersome Public Health systems that consume nearly 100% of their day rather than assisting new teachers, leading efforts at addressing learning loss recovery and providing students with mental health and wellbeing support.
- ✓ The 21 superintendents in the Tuolumne JPA are spending a significant amount of time managing risk assessments related to COVID-19, which causes a significant disruption to their ability to provide needed educational services.

The burdensome interpretation and enforcement of frequently changing and misaligned guidance from California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) has become exhausting and is creating divisiveness between parents, schools, and communities.

To reiterate what our Santa Clara Colleagues stated so eloquently, “School staff are not medical experts, yet are called upon to keep abreast, implement and provide assistance on detailed and complicated COVID-19 isolation and quarantine guidance from the CDPH.”

Inconsistent masking requirements across all sectors has become a significant point of contention for school officials and parents causing discord which takes away from building trusting relationships.

We request immediate and decisive action in regards to the following:

- ✓ Align CDPH and Cal/OSHA guidance on isolation and quarantine rules for staff and students or establish Cal/OSHA exemptions for the education sector to mirror the CDPH guidance that allows staff alignment with students to return safely while maintaining health and safety precautions.
- ✓ We echo the request from our Santa Clara counterparts: “Eliminate, reduce or fully transition responsibility for COVID-19 testing, isolation and quarantine to the healthcare and insurance providers or public health sector as appropriately defined.” School officials and staff are working out of their scope of authority in regards to the health care decisions required to be made. We request those decisions be shifted back to the healthcare sector immediately.
- ✓ Reduce the complexity and number of reports school districts must produce so they may have time to spend with students to address their social emotional, academic, and learning loss needs.
- ✓ Establish criteria immediately that allows school districts to safely shift to an endemic response that aligns with safety practices found in other public sectors
- ✓ Align masking standards for all public sectors.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective as leaders who are working directly in the field. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you toward finding solutions.

Sincerely,

- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Matthew Strahl, Superintendent, Alpine COE/USD  
 Date: 2/22/2022 | 10:19:08 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Dr. Torie Gibson, Superintendent, Amador COE/USD  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 9:10:33 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Carla Haakma, Superintendent, Belleview ES  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 9:07:34 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Wynette Hilton, Superintendent, BOFG USD  
 Date: 2/21/2022 | 8:14:14 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Michael Chimento, Superintendent, Bret Harte USD  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 9:00:27 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Scott Navik, Superintendent, CCOE  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 10:14:00 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Mark Campbell, Superintendent, CUSD  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 10:27:42 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Sarah Gillum, Superintendent, Columbia USD  
 Date: 2/20/2022 | 10:44:24 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Dawn Mori, Superintendent, Curtis Creek SD  
 Date: 2/22/2022 | 10:31:39 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Contessa Pelfrey, Superintendent, Jamestown SD  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 10:05:05 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Paula Wyatt, Superintendent, Mark Twain ESD  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 9:14:00 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Tami Beall, Superintendent, Sonora ES  
 Date: 2/21/2022 | 10:27:54 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Ed Pelfrey, Superintendent, Sonora High SD  
 Date: 2/22/2022 | 9:58:43 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Jeff Winfield, Superintendent, Soulsbyville EDS  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 10:03:18 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Ben Howell, Superintendent, Summerville ESD  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 10:28:05 AM PST
- DocuSigned by:  
  
 Michael Merrill, Superintendent, Summerville UHSD  
 Date: 2/18/2022 | 9:03:47 AM PST

DocuSigned by:  
Cathy Parker  
Cathy Parker, Superintendent, TCSOS

Date: 2/18/2022 | 9:37:00 AM PST

DocuSigned by:  
Gabe Wings  
Gabe Wings, Superintendent, Twain Harte SD

Date: 2/18/2022 | 9:31:35 AM PST

DocuSigned by:  
Thomas Hoskins  
Tom Hoskins, Superintendent, Vallecito USD

Date: 2/18/2022 | 12:20:24 PM PST