



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senate Republicans: End The Mandates

ANDREW J. LANZA February 14, 2022

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Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt, Deputy Leader Andrew Lanza, and members of the Senate Republican Conference today called for an end to unconstitutional mandates promulgated by Governor Kathy Hochul and her Department of Health. The Republicans announced they would force a vote on the New York Senate floor today to end the mandates.

This vote comes in the wake of the so-called vax or mask business mandate being lifted, but with the mask mandate in schools and childcare centers **remaining in place**. Children are the least vulnerable individuals with regard to COVID-19, but the most susceptible to psychological damage due to their lives being upended for the past two years.

“School children and toddlers are suffering emotionally. Parents and families are at their wit’s end. New Yorkers are just sick and tired of these one-size-fits-all Albany mandates. I vowed to my constituents that I would fight these unconstitutional mandates until every single one is lifted. I intend to keep that promise, and I am proud to stand alongside my fellow Republicans today to force our Democrat colleagues to explain where they stand. It’s time to end the mandates now,” **said Leader Ortt.**

“The Governor needs to stop hurting our kids. Listen to the science and end the mask mandate,” **said Deputy Republican Leader Andrew Lanza.**

“When Governor Hochul substituted her judgment on masks for the judgment of parents she awakened a sleeping giant. Let's be clear- all the data shows school age kids are at far less risk than any other group when it comes to COVID. There is absolutely no reason any child should be forced to wear a mask for seven hours a day in school, especially when that same kid can get a pizza, go to a movie or watch a basketball game mask-free. What makes schools such a hotbed for COVID risk but not an arena? Nothing. This is about control, not about public health. All mask mandates must end now. Lets restore choice and individual judgment and stop baseless political fear mongering,” **said Senator Mike Martucci.**

“It’s well past time for Governor Hochul to finally end her mask mandate for school children. Families are fed up, frustrated, and want the Governor’s mask mandate removed – and we want New York State to start putting our kids first. While neighboring states including Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Connecticut all have mask mandate off-ramps, Governor Hochul's indecision and delay are keeping our kids on a road to nowhere, with no end in sight to her oppressive mask mandates that are doing real harm mentally, emotionally, developmentally, and educationally. The people are speaking — and the Governor needs to start listening,” **said Senator Daphne Jordan.**

“Like so many of the mandates handed down by the state during this pandemic, the mask mandate for school children isn’t about public health, it’s about control. At lowest risk for infection but at highest risk for lasting educational and social problems from being masked seven hours a day, our children are paying the price for the administration’s unconstitutional overreach. The public health emergency is over; it’s time to eliminate all mandates, including this ongoing mask charade in our schools. The learning disruptions

caused by government directives have done enough harm, we must allow schools to refocus on their primary mission, which is educating our children,” **said Senator George Borrello.**

The Senate Republicans’ proposed amendment will be brought forth by **Senator Mike Martucci** on the floor of the Senate later this afternoon. The measure would force a vote on unmasking our kids, and dismantling the Governor’s overreaching mandates and restoring checks and balances. This vote is an opportunity to put legislators on the record on how they feel about masking kids while mask mandates almost everywhere else in New York and the Nation are being lifted. Every member of the Senate Republican Conference has committed to voting yes on the much-needed measure.

“Parents have had enough of the nonsensical double standards and oppressive mandates imposed on our school children. It’s time Governor Hochul stops waffling and ends this government overreach. We know the harm it has done to our youngest students and those with disabilities. It’s time to double down on testing and treatment and help get New York moving forward again,” **said Senator Fred Akshar.**

“Governor Kathy Hochul and the State Senate Majority have repeatedly said they would ‘follow the science’ regarding mandates. Their maintaining these harmful mask mandates on our students while removing them for almost every other indoor activity proves this was all just political rhetoric,” **said Senator Phil Boyle.**

“As I have said in the past, statewide mandates are not the answer. No one individual or agency should have the authority to impose such directives and it is time to restore our system of checks and balances in government. As more and more constituents call for an end to mask mandates in schools and childcare centers, I urge my Senate colleagues to take action immediately to stop such government overreach,” **said Senator Patrick M. Gallivan.**

“Every day, we see the detrimental effects of one-party control and a lack of checks and balances in state government. We see it in the overreaching mandates put on New Yorkers, the policies pushed and passed by the legislative majorities and the burdensome regulations and lack of tax relief that have forced residents, families and businesses to flee the state. As I have said throughout the coronavirus pandemic, New Yorkers should be provided with choices instead of mandates. I am hopeful that the Senate majority will agree and finally take action to end the mandates and restore accountability and balance to state government,” **said Senator Joseph Griffo.**

“We must end governing by mandate. Schools, child care providers, and especially parents deserve to know the path forward. I do not support any action that circumvents the Legislature and gives more power to the Governor or state agencies like the Department of Health,” **said Senator Pam Helming.**

“It is long past time to unmask our children and allow them to return to normalcy. The damage that New York State mandates are senselessly doing to our youngest residents is unconscionable. These children need to fully enjoy their childhood to reach their potential

and these policies are taking that opportunity away from them. I urge my Democrat colleagues to join us in protecting our youngest and most vulnerable now,” **said Senator Mario R. Mattera**

“Albany mandates are overwhelming our schools, our businesses, and our local governments. These mandates are coming from one person, our governor, who is sidestepping the legislature and enacting policies that are not based in science. New Yorkers elected legislators to represent their interests not pass the buck. It is far past time to restore checks and balances and end unconstitutional mandates that are holding our state back,” **said Senator Peter Oberacker.**

“The continuation of an irrational and unscientific mask mandate for school children, without a definitive end in sight, continues to define New York as a state under the control of extreme executive order, without legislative checks and balances, and ignoring the dire need for local decision-making. New York State already ranks near the bottom in too many categories of affordability, freedoms, and quality of life. Governor Hochul is leading us toward the bottom again as neighboring states, and many places across the nation and around the world, are taking bold steps into a post-COVID return to common sense,” **said Senator Tom O’Mara.**

“New Yorkers have grown weary of Albany’s heavy-handed approach to the pandemic. With omicron infections rapidly decreasing throughout the state it is time to end these mandates and empower local governments with the ability to best meet the health and safety needs of the communities they represent,” **said Senator Anthony Palumbo.**

“My colleagues and I have continually called on the Governor to publicize the metrics and benchmarks being used to determine masking in schools. Teachers, parents, and students deserve transparency and to understand what the deciding factors are in these decisions regarding our children. Masking has ended almost everywhere except our schools, NYers need answers,” **said Senator Ed Rath.**

“Every day, my office hears from parents concerned about their children still being required to wear masks in the classroom. New York State has lifted it’s mask mandate for businesses and neighboring states are doing away with masks in the classroom. It is well past time for New York State to give parents a choice when it comes to their children’s health and safety,” **said Senator Patty Ritchie.**

“With COVID-19 numbers rapidly declining and states like our neighbors in New Jersey and Connecticut announcing definitive plans to drop mandated masking, it is far past time to put an end to 'one size fits all' mandates and return immediately to representative government. Regardless of personal opinions on the effectiveness of masks, the Governor has provided no scientific benchmarks or off-ramp to help New Yorkers understand the state's reasoning for keeping the mandate in place. The confusion is only stoking frustration and division. New Yorkers deserve a voice in the process and that starts by restoring the Legislature as the co-equal branch of government it is constitutionally required to be,” **said Senator Sue Serino.**

“Study after study has shown that masks have negatively impacted students' emotional, physical and educational development. It's long past time for the governor to follow the actual science, do what's right for our students and end the unfair and unpopular mask mandates on schools,” **said Senator Dan Stec.**

“It’s beyond time for Governor Hochul to follow the science and lift her imperial mask mandate on our schools, unmask our kids now, and not make them suffer for several more weeks with the physical impact and emotional and psychological toll of wearing the masks. Our neighboring states New Jersey and Massachusetts have ended their mandates, it’s time for New York to follow suit. If the Governor continues her stubborn obstinance on this, then the legislature should pass legislation I am sponsoring with Assemblyman Chris Tague to prohibit the state from forcing children to wear the masks!” **said Senator Jim Tedisco.**

“The public has patiently abided by the never-ending, often confusing, mandates coming out of Albany but their patience is wearing thin. The justification that these mandates are for public safety erodes when it’s clear the mandates are inconsistent and arbitrary. For the second time the State has rescinded its mask mandate for most public places except schools. Why is it OK for students to go maskless at sporting events and restaurants but not in the classroom? It defies logic. I’m proud to stand with my colleagues calling for an end to these draconian measures,” **said Senator Alexis Weik.**

Senate Republicans have been a steadfast voice calling for more checks and balances in state government, and putting an end to the Cuomo-Hochul era of governance by mandates. Last

month, the conference called on Governor Hochul to end her one-size-fits-all Albany mandates, and **return to fact-based, collaborative governing**. Additionally, Leader Ortt has called on the Governor multiple times to **unmask our kids**.

Last week, Leader Ortt and Senate Republicans **penned a letter** to the Governor blasting the decision to keep kids masked & calling for metrics for an off-ramp. A representative from the Department of Health later confirmed that they have no “**data targets**” for ending school masking. On Saturday, Leader Ortt **stood with educators and parents** to reiterate his calls for an end to the child mask mandate.

A key plan in the Senate Republicans “**Take Back New York**” 2022 agenda – which the Conference has been unveiling since January – is restoring accountability to state government. One of the policies within the plan is to **restore checks and balances to the state government**.

The amendment will be presented, debated, and voted on in today’s **Senate Session**.