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WNY EDUCATION ALLIANCE CALLS FOR RETURN TO NORMALCY

(Buffalo, NY – January 26, 2022) Over the last few months, there have been a number of important developments which have significantly reduced the health risks associated with Covid and, as a result, the cost/benefit tradeoff of public health policies directed toward schools and children.

We summarize the key changes below:

- **The most important development has been the approval of the vaccine for 5-11-year-old children on October 29, 2021.**
- For unvaccinated children, the health risks associated with Covid have proven to be similar to the health risks associated with the flu; for vaccinated kids, the health risks are next to zero.
- At this point, and for the first time since the pandemic began, all school-aged children have had the opportunity to be vaccinated.
- At the same time, vaccinations and boosters have significantly reduced the risk of Covid for older people and at-risk groups.
- In addition, therapeutics have been introduced to treat those with Covid.
- **Another significant change has been the emergence of the Omicron variant, which has proven to be much less virulent and more contagious than Delta.**
- There has been a growing recognition that vaccinations and cloth masks are less effective in reducing transmission of the Omicron variant.
- Since Omicron is much more contagious than previous variants, a significant portion of the community now has some form of immunity against the virus, either through vaccinations or from prior infections.
- The result is that there has been a significant decoupling between new cases, which have increased substantially, and hospitalizations/deaths, which have declined, highlighting the significantly reduced health risks associated with Covid.
- Omicron has accelerated the transition from pandemic to endemic; as a result, leading medical experts now believe that public health policies need to shift from attempting to prevent transmission of Covid to protecting those most at risk, where vaccinations and boosters have proven to be most effective (see link below).
- **Meanwhile, mental health issues in young people, driven in large part by unnecessary school closures, quarantines, and mask mandates, have grown to**



crisis levels, according to the U.S. Surgeon General and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- While the benefits of cloth masks in schools remain, at best, minimal, it is becoming clear that prolonged mask use (approaching 2 years now) is negatively impacting learning, speech development, and mental health for children.
- Unlike cloth masks, N95 masks do appear to effectively protect the user.

Based on these important developments, WNY Education Alliance is calling for the immediate return to normalcy for all schools and children in New York State. **It is now abundantly clear that the harms associated with current restrictions for schools and children vastly outweigh any potential benefits.**

In particular, WNY Education calls for:

- The elimination of school closures tied to Covid.
- The elimination of quarantines for close contacts in schools and day care facilities.
- The elimination of restrictions on extracurricular activities.
- The elimination of mask mandates for children.
- The elimination of asymptomatic testing for children.

The time to restore normalcy for children is now. At this stage, individuals can effectively protect themselves through vaccinations, boosters, therapeutics, and the one-way use of N95 masks. There is no scientific or moral basis for continuing to place the burden of controlling an endemic virus on children, particularly since they remain least at risk.

We must address the mental health crisis for children by eliminating all Covid-related restrictions immediately and treating children not as “disease vectors” but simply like children.

For further information and supporting documents, please go to <https://www.urgencyofnormal.com>.

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WNY Education Alliance

WNY Education Alliance is a non-partisan organization committed to improving education in the Western New York area through advocacy, community engagement, and strategic partnerships.