



COUNTY JUDGE

Fort Bend County, Texas

The Honorable KP George
County Judge

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August 11, 2021

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas, 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath,

As millions of Texas public school students return to school this month, today marks the first day of the 2021-22 school year for students in my community's largest district. As a parent, a former school board member, and the husband of an educator, I can personally identify with the pleas of parents, teachers, and school administrators requesting that measures be taken to protect our children in their learning environment by requiring face coverings for students and school personnel.

The highly contagious Delta variant has raged across Texas, and Fort Bend is no exception, as we have seen an increase in new confirmed coronavirus cases and hospitalizations in the past few weeks. The purpose of this letter is to request that you stand up and lead on behalf of our children by providing local school districts flexibility on the following items:

- The ability to require face coverings in District facilities in response to local health conditions; and
- The ability to provide a virtual school option for families who want their students to participate in online learning until local health conditions improve.

As you know, unlike some of our surrounding counties, Fort Bend has a relatively successful vaccination rate due to the combined efforts of the community and the county following the CDC's recommended guidelines including social distancing and wearing face coverings.

The need for this school year to start with our students and educators wearing face coverings has only been made clearer since the Governor's Executive Order, GA-38, which is hampering local officials' ability to implement recommended protocols that include requiring face coverings and physical distancing.

COVID cases are expected to increase exponentially once schools open. We are already seeing high numbers and I feel that it is important that we do everything in our power to reverse this trajectory, but that can only happen through more vaccinations and having requirements on face coverings in public places, such as our schools, during this critical time.

As a parent and former school board member yourself, I know that you know well the tough decisions local leaders face in protecting our children and their educators. By actively acknowledging the current crisis and advocating for these measures, we can keep our children in school this year and keep them safe.

Commissioner, this is bigger than us. This is about the ability of local officials to respond to the pressing challenges and protect our most precious resource: our children. I look forward to your response and finding ways to remove the barriers to protecting our children and educators.

Sincerely,

KP George
County Judge
Fort Bend County