

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

101 Peachtree Road
Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920

Nick Markarian
Superintendent

Phone: 908-204-2600, ext. 101
Fax: 908-766-7641
E-mail: nmarkarian@bernardsboe.com

June 10, 2021

Governor Phil Murphy
The State House
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Re: Masking Requirements in Schools

Dear Governor Murphy,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Bernards Township Board of Education. Our school district has been fully open for all in-person students since May 3, 2021. We are very grateful that since May 3 we have remained healthy and been able to be in school, in-person, five full days each week. Recently, we have been working on our application for federal grant funds through the American Rescue Plan. As part of our grant application we must submit a Safe Return Plan and hold a public comment session for same.

Last night we held the public comment session for the Safe Return Plan at our Board of Education meeting. While several issues came up, the predominant area where the public expressed a strong sentiment was related to mask requirements in schools. In summary, our public and our Board of Education is looking for masks to be optional for school occupants (staff/students/visitors). So that is our ask. *Please make masks optional as soon as possible.* While we have utilized the various exceptions in EO 175, it would be hugely helpful if we had a simple and uniform message that *masks for everyone, in all school related settings, are optional.* We will soon be ending the regular school year, but our extended school year for special education students is right around the corner in July. A clear message that we are allowed to make masks optional would be very helpful in running our extended school year programs most effectively. Of course beyond this summer, September awaits, and we would love to be able to know now that masking will be optional in the fall (as well as this summer).

As one final note I would add that the Safe Return Plan template indicates that remote schooling will not be an option in the fall. When all of our students return to school this fall, in-person, filling our classrooms, halls and cafeterias, social distancing will not be possible. I certainly hope that does not make us ineligible for the American Rescue Plan funds. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



On behalf of the Bernards Township Board of Education
Nick Markarian, Superintendent

Cc: Senator Thomas H. Kean Jr., Assemblywoman Nancy F. Munoz, Assemblyman Jon M. Bramnick