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August 13, 2021

Superintendent Chris Ragsdale
Cobb County School District
514 Glover Street
Marietta, GA 30060
VIA EMAIL: chris.ragsdale@cobbk12.org

Dear Superintendent Ragsdale,

Like so many other parents in Cobb County, I was delighted to send my high schooler back to the classroom face-to-face. My child is old enough to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and his vaccinated status coupled with the knowledge that there were no major outbreaks at his school last year gave me a glimmer of hope that his 11th grade year might be the first full year of high school where he and his friends could enjoy a little normalcy.

It is two weeks into the school year, and I no longer have much hope that with the current trajectory of COVID-19 in our community, CCSD has a realistic path forward to continue in-person learning.

It is time to require masks in our schools. We know that in Atlanta Public Schools, only about 18% of eligible students and 58% of faculty, staff, and other district employees are vaccinated. Based on Cobb County data, I doubt that the numbers of vaccinated faculty and staff in CCSD is that much higher than in Atlanta, and it is for this reason that **I also urge Cobb County Schools to require that all unvaccinated employees be surveillance tested for COVID-19 twice weekly.**

If we want to keep these students in the classroom for a year of in-person learning, it is essential that there be enough healthy adults to keep the schools and all auxiliary services, like transportation and nutrition, up and running. We know that surveillance testing is the best way to make this happen. And, if we want to keep students who are too young to be vaccinated healthy and face-to-face, we know that all data and public health advice – including from Cobb & Douglas Public Health – indicates that universal masking in our schools is the best way to make this happen.

I appreciate your consideration and hope that you will contact me if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,