



Community District Education Council 26 New York City Department of Education

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Dear Chancellor Banks,

We would like to thank you and your team again for your time in answering and addressing so many of the questions and concerns of our families in District 26 at our recent Town Hall. We realize that the Department of Education needs to do much more to ensure equity across the city while ensuring our children are given the proper tools to succeed to the best of their abilities.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant pain and suffering, fortunately, new daily case counts continue to decline, according to the latest statistics on the NYC Health Dept website. The trend of confirmed deaths has decreased as well. These trends combined with the high rates of vaccinations have made it possible for Mayor Adams to end most pandemic restrictions, including discontinuation of the highly restrictive Key to NYC vaccination requirement on March 7, 2022.

It is understandable that to ensure the safety of over 900,000 students many restrictions had to be implemented since March 2020. Now that we are returning to more normal lives, there are still several COVID-19 restrictions that we feel are questionable to retain. One is the masking requirement for school children between the ages of 2 to 4 years. Another is the vaccination requirement for parents or family members to enter school facilities, preventing many parents from gaining access to important school functions such as PTA and SLT meetings. Lastly is the requirement for students to be vaccinated to participate in certain sports such as basketball and other after-school activities.

Recently, the Mayor lifted the Covid-19 vaccine requirement for professional athletes to participate in sporting events, yet children are not permitted to participate in athletics even though rates of infection among children are much lower than it is for adults. Furthermore, we feel that it is inconsistent to apply a different set of requirements for children participating in after-school athletics as opposed to those engaged in similar activities but during regular school hours. Many of the children across the city rely on extracurricular activities to prepare them for future endeavors as well as to increase their opportunities for scholarships in higher education.

In addition, many parents are ardent volunteers in our school system, but due to personal choices regarding vaccines, are not allowed access to their children's schools. Studies have shown that parents who are active in their children's schools help pave the way for their children's success. Our schools rely heavily on the many VOLUNTEER members in our parent organizations, including Parent Teacher Associations, School Leadership Teams, and the Community Education Councils. It is very troubling that students and parents/families are still required to be vaccinated when public visitors to all other government buildings and facilities are not required to be vaccinated.

Therefore, we respectfully urge you to remove the inconsistent COVID-19 vaccination requirements placed on our students and their families. Thank you.