



Michigan House of Representatives

August 19, 2021

Dr. Adam London
Administrative Health Officer
Kent County Health Department
700 Fuller NE
Grand Rapids MI 49505

Dear Director London,

For over a year, our county, state, and country have been learning how best to manage a pandemic and mitigate the spread of coronavirus in our communities and schools. Today, the Delta Variant has emerged, causing a fourth wave of disease spread. Just this week the CDC elevated Kent County's disease transmission from "significant" to "high" and recommended the use of masks in indoor public space regardless of vaccination status. Sadly, masks have morphed from a simple and effective public health solution to a symbol of our country's partisan divide. Meanwhile, the science and guidance from the US CDC is clear: Masking is one of the most effective ways to stop the transmission of the coronavirus, especially among those who are unvaccinated, or too young to get the vaccine¹, such as our school children.

The Delta variant is rapidly spreading across the country just as we are preparing to send our children back to school. We are seeing the variant affect children at an unprecedented rate.² We must take common sense steps, recommended by experts such as the American Academy of Pediatrics³, and require our students, teachers, and other school staff to mask up indoors. We believe following the clear recommendations of our scientific and medical communities should be obvious and free from partisan confusion.

Unfortunately, last week, a number of our colleagues issued a letter⁴ threatening to defund the Kent County Health Department if the chief health officer issued an order requiring masks in county school districts. Such a decision, according to Michigan law, is completely under the purview of county health department directors in our state. Indeed, this law was passed so that health experts would make decisions without the interference of politicians with little or no experience in public health or medicine. The threat is extremely concerning considering the impacts that would be made on the Kent County Health Departments ability to serve the community through their impactful programs such as care for expecting mothers, lead poisoning screenings for our children, dental care, defense against foodborne illness through restaurant inspections, PFAS investigations, and numerous other programs that keep our

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/08/13/children-hospitalizations-covid-delta/>

³ <https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

⁴ <https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/lawmakers-urge-kent-co-health-department-not-to-issue-mask-mandate/69-778458f2-c63b-465b-894a-5d10670692e1>

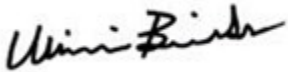
community healthy. Scoring political points with threats to defund public health in the midst of a pandemic is abhorrent, and it is disturbing that some of our colleagues, none of whom hold expertise in public health, have chosen to make such public threats against our top-notch county public health experts and medical community.

Rather than ignoring facts and attempting to score political points, we must come together to protect the public health of our community.

We continue our steadfast support for Kent County Health Officer, Adam London as he and his team follow the science, local data, and the guidance from the Center for Disease Control, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Further we request Kent County take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of our school children and the entire community, by requiring masking indoors in educational facilities as we begin the school year.

Finally, in continued service to our community, we commit to do everything in our power to prevent the defunding of the Kent County Health Department, should it order scientifically-validated measures to keep all our children safe for in-person learning.

Sincerely,



Winnie Brinks
State Senator
Michigan's 29th Senate District



David LaGrand
State Representative
Michigan's 75th House District



Rachel Hood
State Representative
Michigan's 76th House District