

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED  
PRIOR TO THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' SESSION  
ON  
THURSDAY, February 17, 2022  
AT  
10:00 A.M.

Questions, concerns or comments about these items can be directed  
to staff or the Commissioners by contacting the Commissioners' office at

(503) 434-7501

OR

[BOCINFO@co.yamhill.or.us](mailto:BOCINFO@co.yamhill.or.us)

## Megan Marasco

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**From:** Val Blaha <music@valblaha.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 16, 2022 6:59 PM  
**To:** BOC Info; nmontesano@newsregister.com  
**Subject:** Public comment re: Agenda Item I10, for Feb. 17, 2022 meeting

[This email originated outside of Yamhill County]

Public comment re: Agenda Item I10, for Feb. 17, 2022 meeting

Dear Yamhill County Commissioners,

I see that you have included a letter to all Yamhill county school district superintendents in this week's BOC packet. I note that the letter fails to reflect the devastating effects of the Covid virus, and instead focuses on the impact that masking has reportedly had on some students.

Instead of viewing masks as some sort of punishment tool, I encourage the BOC to view them through the lens of public health. Masks have allowed the vast majority of students and teachers to safely return to in-person school during the 2021-22 year by substantially reducing the risk of virus transmission. Most students, particularly those in upper elementary, middle and high school, do not suffer any substantial problems with wearing masks, and actually feel empowered by the chance to do this small act to protect their own health, and that of others.

I have taken the liberty of editing the final three paragraphs of the draft letter. Please see my edits below, and give serious thought to adopting these suggested changes.

Sincerely,

Val Blaha  
McMinnville, OR

Addendum: Edits to draft letter to school district superintendents (Italics indicated added text.)

As you are keenly aware, our children have been ~~disproportionately~~ impacted by the COVID pandemic. ~~Initial school closures and~~ Remote learning took a heavy toll on our students *and their families*, and we have always ~~strived~~ *hoped* to keep schools open for in-person learning. Since the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, we have been concerned about COVID protocols that keep children masked ~~indoors and outdoors, separate them from their peers and~~ *may* limit full engagement in classroom learning *for some students. The current CDC guidance still calls for masking inside schools. (1)(2)*

~~Masking children during the entire school day~~ *The spread of COVID* has had severe consequences on *many county residents, from learning impairments, prolonged issues with or delayed speech patterns, health impacts, and social and emotional isolation from missed school and work days to illness (short term and prolonged), as well as death. Masks work to reduce the spread of COVID (3), and are one of the best public health tools to keep students in school. However, for some*

*students, masking can cause problems with speech and communication, or have other negative health impacts. As Commissioners, we are concerned about our children's overall health recognize that a balance needs to be found to protect our school communities from COVID while limiting negative impacts of masking.*

*We want to be clear that Yamhill County BOC has no jurisdiction over the school districts, and will not be issuing any guidance or recommendation that children continue to mask indoors or outdoors regarding masking in schools. However, we believe that masking protocols should be tied to case and spread rates (as has been recommended by reputable public health experts), rather than on arbitrary dates or deadlines, and we encourage all school districts to take into account the local covid case numbers and forecasts when deciding on masking requirements. We hope every school district agrees.*

- (1) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>
- (2) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/masks.html>
- (3) <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-94960-5>