



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY STATE SENATE

September 4, 2020

The Honorable Andy Beshear
Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100
Frankfort, KY 40601

The Honorable Jacqueline Coleman
Lieutenant Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Governor Beshear and Lieutenant Governor Coleman:

Fellow members of the Kentucky General Assembly and I continue to hear from constituents regarding their concerns amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. You might suspect that most allude to the virus's direct health impact, but they do not. The truth is, the overwhelming majority of correspondences are in response to the measures our state is taking to mitigate the direct health impacts of the virus.

School districts across the Commonwealth have worked diligently for months to implement safety precautions and innovative strategies to protect students, teachers, and the community. All while reaching the vital goal of getting our kids back in school. I have reviewed the plans from numerous districts. Kentucky school districts have taken the guidelines from both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) very seriously. Several school districts in Senate District 2, which I am honored to represent, have begun their in-person instruction while providing Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) options for families. The families who have chosen in-person education for their children have not done so lightly. They have recognized that their child's emotional, psychological, social, and educational best interest is among their peers and teachers.

I was recently notified by a parent in my district about a concerning situation they have found themselves in. It relates to their child who is a special needs student. The concern they expressed is personal to me. That is why I feel I have a professional obligation as a State Senator and a moral obligation as a father to write to you today.

They reported that the school told them their child may not attend in-person education if they are unable to wear a mask at all times throughout the day. That instead, they would have to choose the NTI option provided. It could be that this particular school is not aware that [the CDC has](#)

[acknowledged](#) that face masks are challenging for some kids. While the CDC strongly encourages face masks to the greatest possible extent, these medical experts understand that a face mask is not always feasible. The [CDC website reads](#):

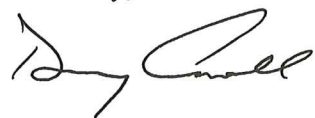
CDC recognizes that wearing masks may not be possible in every situation or for some people. In some situations, wearing a mask may exacerbate a physical or mental health condition, lead to a medical emergency, or introduce significant safety concerns. Adaptations and alternatives should be considered whenever possible to increase the feasibility of wearing a mask or to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading if it is not possible to wear one.

With that in mind, I am asking you to utilize the significant advantages of your bully pulpit and close working relations with KDE. Please take an opportunity during your daily briefing or more formally through written communication to clarify the acceptable guidelines pertaining to this important issue. I was pleased to see the new guidelines issued by the KDE did make brief mention of "Exceptions for special needs students," but it appears to only be in relation to students on a bus. I believe additional emphasis on these exceptions may be in order to ensure our schools and school personnel are aware.

Special needs students are kids who are most in need of the benefits in-person education provides. Districts have done a great job designing plans for our students. I trust that if they hear directly from you, adaptations and alternatives can be implemented to prevent other cases of unnecessary heartache for special needs children and their families.

Like each of us, these families only want what is best for their kids, and they are asking us to be supportive of them in their decisions. I ask that you join me to support them by clarifying information and guidelines to schools and school personnel.

Sincerely,



Danny Carroll
Senate District 2



Robert Stivers
Senate President



Damon Thayer
Senate Majority Floor Leader



David Givens
Senate President Pro Tempore



Julie Raque Adams
Senate Majority Caucus Chair

Governor Beshear and Lt. Governor Coleman

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Wilson
Senate Majority Whip

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max Wise". The signature is cursive, with the first name "Max" being more prominent and the last name "Wise" following in a similar style.

Max Wise
Senate District 16
Chairman, Senate Education Committee