

Morrow County School District

Serving the Families of Boardman, Heppner, and Irrigon in Northeastern Oregon

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To whom it may concern,

Morrow County School District is writing this letter to express our concern over Governor Kate Brown's mandates that started July 29, 2021 that directed the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to write a rule requiring face coverings to be worn in all K-12 indoor settings for the 2021 – 2022 school year. The rule, (OAR 333-019-1015), was adopted by OHA on August 2, 2021. OAR (333-019-1030) was then mandated on August 25, 2021 that all employees must be vaccinated or fill out an exception by October 18, 2021.

The additional mandates have caused a lot of stress for staff and in the community. The additional mandates are not helpful as we try to educate students all while staff morale is at an all time low because they do not feel that anyone is listening to their concerns. We would like to have a voice regarding this decision and feel strongly that even while case numbers are not decreasing, Morrow County School District could have managed the situation better. A more positive climate in our schools and communities would exist if we could have retained local control related to mask wearing and vaccinations. We feel extremely grateful to have been able to provide the students of Morrow County School District exemplary in-class, in-person instruction for most of the 2020 – 2021 school year, as well as into our current school year. In that time, never once have we had any reports or evidence of school spread this year or last. We worked tirelessly with our Local Public Health Authority (LPHA) to ensure that our staff, students and families were safe.

We are not willing to ignore the laws and orders of the state of Oregon and furthermore risk the livelihoods of our staff with civil penalties to include \$500/day fines and sanctions on professional licensure. However, we will continue to advocate for our students, parents and communities for local control of our school operations. Our school board will work to meet the requirements as Governor Brown presented and the rule states.

Please consider allowing school districts to have local control instead of state-wide mandates. We have followed all of the mandates to this point as we want to keep the students in the school getting the best education for all that is possible. Morrow County School District is very worried about the next mandate as we know that not all staff and community feel supported or listened to. We will lose staff and students to other occupations and to home school if we are not able to have more local control. We are going to lose staff because of the vaccination mandate. The strong collaboration in our school district is evidence that we are capable of making the best decisions for our school district and community, at this time.

Sincerely,

Dirk Dirksen, Superintendent

Becky Kindle, Board Chair

Morrow County Schools, in partnership with families and communities, provide each student the opportunity to develop values, knowledge, skills and self-confidence to become life-long learners and responsible citizens.

Morrow County School District prohibits discrimination and harassment on any basis protected by law, including but not limited to, an individual's perceived or actual race, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, mental or physical disability, marital status, age, sex, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy, familial status, economic status, veterans' status or genetic information in providing education or access to benefits of education services, activities and programs in accordance with Title VI, Title VII, Title IX and other civil rights or discrimination issues; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Americans with Disabilities Act; and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination act of 2008.



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