

To Craig City School District Mitigation Advisory Committee,

My name is Rusty Reynolds, I am a long-time resident of Prince of Wales Island (POW) and I have lived in Alaska since 2001 and on POW since 2003. Since moving to Alaska, I have married and now have two wonderful children ages 5 and 7. My children attend the Craig City School District (CCSD) Elementary school on POW Island and my wife and I believe it is a great school with good teachers. My children love the school and their teachers. CCSD provides an excellent learning environment with ample opportunities. During the COVID pandemic, CCSD has gone through many changes just as many schools across the country have done. However, the most recent changes adopted by the CCSD School Board on January 14th in a special meeting removing all verbiage in their Mitigation and Prevention Plan following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is creating an extremely unsafe and unhealthy environment putting our children, staff, families and our community members at risk and does not support the safe reopening and sustained safe operations of Craig City School District.

CCSD received emergency relief funds through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act to help meet help meet a wide range of needs arising from the Coronavirus pandemic, including reopening schools safely, sustaining their safe operation, and addressing students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs resulting from the pandemic. Districts are required to develop and make publicly available a prevention and mitigation plan for **SAFE RETURN** to in-person instruction. The ARP prevention and mitigation plan has 8 key areas a District must identify in their plan: 1) masks, 2) physical distancing, 3) handwashing and respiratory etiquette, 4) cleaning, 5) contact tracing, 6) screening test, 7) provide vaccinations and 8) accommodations. The Mitigation Plan, under Plan Components specifically states **"Districts must implement, to the greatest extent practicable, prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the educators' health and safety of students, and other staff"**

In a special board meeting on January 14th, members of the CCSD board decided via majority vote to not follow the guidelines required by the District Plan Requirements May 2021, which identifies the key elements that must be in a prevention and mitigation plan. Specifically, the school board abolished masking, physical distancing, cleaning, contact tracing, and screening tests for all students and staff. Members of the CCSD Mitigation Advisory Committee (a subcommittee assembled to provide recommendations to the board for COVID mitigations) provided an updated draft and recommendations with consideration of the current situation within the school, community, and community response. Three members of the school board out of four determined the recommendations in the draft were unnecessary and voted to remove the majority of the COVID mitigations that were in place and not adopt the advisory committee recommendations. The current CCSD Prevention and Mitigation Plan does **NOT** follow the direction required by the American Rescue Plan Act. Instead, the school board revised the Plan and eliminated all mitigations to slow the spread of COVID within our school system.

In the current CCSD Prevention and Mitigation Plan they do not follow current CDC guidelines for masking, instead the school board has chosen "mask choice" contributing to an un-safe environment according to CDC. The current plan does not follow CDC guidelines for physical distancing. CDC recommends 6' distance or allows 3' physical distancing *if* masks are worn. CCSD does not require masks to be worn but has adopted the 3' physical distancing in their plan. Additionally, CCSD has arranged

classrooms in a manner that does not allow 3' physical distancing between students while sitting at their desks. This does not even follow CCSD's own plan they have written thus creating an un-safe school environment.

From my observations, CCSD does not follow current CDC cleaning guidelines between users or groups for maintaining healthy facilities. CCDC does recommend cleaning between users or groups, but this does not appear to be implemented or enforced. Currently CCSD has all students moving through the cafeteria one after another with no cleaning between groups but rather cleaning at the end of the day. The cafeteria is being used communally and with no physical distancing, masking or separation of any kind. Students move through the cafeteria line in large groups, sit, and eat together. This creates an extremely un-safe environment for our children and does not reduce the spread of COVID to the extent practicable.

Currently, CCSD is not following current CDC recommendations for contact tracing or close contact quarantine. In the current plan, CCSD has eliminated all requirements for close contact students and staff. The current plan does not require close contacts to quarantine. The current plan direction only requires confirmed positive students and staff to isolate for 5 days and does not require proof of a negative test prior to return. CCSD has removed all requirements and verbiage for close contact from their prevention and mitigation plan. CDC guidelines recommends close contacts stay home and quarantine for 5 full days. This creates a very un-safe environment in our schools and community and does not limit the spread of COVID to the extent practicable.

On Monday, 1/31/2022, the State reported 100 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our community. This is 10 times higher than we have seen since the start of the COVID pandemic. Our community is at an extremely high level of community transmission. Also, on Monday Morning Craig Public Health stated that 75% - 80% of the COVID cases in our community are directly related to CCSD Schools.

With all of this said, the message I am trying to communicate here is that CCSD has opened their doors for in-person instruction without following the guidelines outlined in the ARP Prevention and Mitigation Plan requirements to implement, **to the greatest extent practicable**, prevention and mitigation policies **in line with the most up-to -date guidance from CDC for reopening** and operation of school facilities to effectively **maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff**.

If there is something that can be done to encourage the board members at CCSD to reconsider the unsafe environment for our children, I plead that is pursued. I am simply asking CCSD to perform temperature screening at the front doors, require masking in common areas, deliver lunches to classrooms and have a close contact quarantine requirement, or implement mitigations in-line with CDC guidelines to limit COVID transmission and create a safe environment for our children, educators, families and community members.

CCSD board members e-mail and contact numbers below;

Scott Brookshire (President)

<mailto:sbrookshire@craigschools.com>

Joel Steenstra (Vice President)

<mailto:jsteenstra@craigschools.com>

Trish Conaster

<mailto:tconatser@craigschools.com>

Marla Dillman

<mailto:mdillman@craigschools.com>

Tristan Douville

<mailto:tdouville@craigschools.com>