

March 15, 2022

Dr. Elizabeth Richardson
Medical Officer of Health
City of Hamilton

Re: Extension of Mask Requirement in Schools to April 15, 2022

Dear Dr. Richardson,

On behalf of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), I am writing you to request support for the motion passed on March 10, 2022, to maintain the mask requirements for all HWDSB students and staff until April 15, 2022.

Though the province will no longer require masks, cohorting or distancing in schools effective March 21, 2022, Trustees maintained the motion for mask requirements for students in Kindergarten to Grade 3, and passed a motion that students in grades 4 to 12, as well as staff, be required to wear masks until April 15, 2022.

Masking is a health and safety measure that has reduced the spread of COVID-19. By maintaining the mask requirement as part of a gradual phased approach to the return to “normal,” we will better support student, family, and staff well-being through a time of critical change and address significant concerns of rising spread following increased social interactions and travel during March Break.

Under [Section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act](#), a medical officer of health can “require a person or take or to refrain from taking any action that is specified in order to the respect of a communicable disease,” under the condition “that the communicable disease presents a risk to the health of persons in the health unit served by the medical officer of health”.

COVID-19 continues to present a significant risk to the health of the HWDSB community and all residents of the Hamilton area. As Medical Officer of Health to the City of Hamilton, we respectfully ask you to consider the calls from the medical and science communities, and to issue a Section 22 order to maintain mask requirements for all HWDSB students and staff beyond March 21, 2022, when the provincial requirement ends.

By maintaining the mask requirement for these additional weeks, we hope to mitigate challenges related to staffing shortages due to increased absences and support a safer transition through the provincial changes for our community, including medically vulnerable students and staff.

We would also appreciate further information on how Hamilton Public Health will monitor COVID-19 going forward, and what specific outcomes would lead to a Section 22 order requiring increased restrictions in the future. We invite you to join us at an upcoming board meeting to learn more about the ongoing work of Hamilton Public Health in this regard.

As we near two years since the start of the pandemic, the Board has been a diligent partner in supporting Hamilton Public Health with strategies to protect our community against COVID-19. We remain committed to gradual and measured responses that keep the health and safety of our community in mind. We now ask you for your support as we work towards a moderate approach to

implementing changes to public health measures in our schools. We would appreciate a written response to our request as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D Danko". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "D" at the beginning.

Dawn Danko
Chair, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board