

**BRICK TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION**



101 HENDRICKSON AVENUE
BRICK, NEW JERSEY 08724-2599
TELEPHONE (732) 785-3000
EXT. 1019

August 19, 2021

Honorable Phil Murphy
Governor
State of NJ
State House
Trenton, NJ 08608

Dear Governor Murphy:

Please accept this correspondence on behalf of the Brick Township Board of Education. The Brick Township School District is requesting, once again, that local control be returned to the district.

As you stated during a pre-vacation press conference regarding the stress of the past 17 months, we hope your trip to Italy provided you the break needed to recharge. Did the benefit of the trip outweigh the CDC's Level 3 Travel Advisory Notice (dated June 16, 2021) urging Americans to reconsider travel to Italy due to a high level of COVID-19 in the country? Freedom to disregard a travel recommendation from the CDC to provide your family a much-needed respite is your right, it appears. We respect that freedom of choice and concur that the past 17 months have been stressful for all, especially our children. The past 17 months represents approximately 40% of our preschool through 2nd grade student's lifetime and 100% of their school experience. It is unfortunate that their families do not have the same freedom of input in their child's health, social and emotional well-being. Upon graduation, the Class of 2022 will have spent 20% of their school experience under Executive Orders and Mandates, moreover, 45% of their sophomore year and 100% of their junior they were isolated from friends - and now in their senior year, social interaction will be limited through masking and physical distancing. Like your recent trip to Italy, our families deserve the same social justice and emotional equity.

As we approach our 3rd academic year confronting COVID-19 risks, as community members and leaders we must come together and do all we can to return the CHILD in childhood: focus on safety and wellness, effective education, voice of community, and equity. Executive Order 251 must be rescinded, allowing the opportunity for healing and community cooperation instead of dissection. To expect society, especially our children, to continue to accept mandates and restrictions indefinitely, based on suggested recommendations, is not only

unrealistic, but unjust. When does it end? As stated in the attached May 27, 2021 letter, there was once a need for mandates and control to ensure the safety of our NJ communities, but it is time for the decision-making authority for school districts to be returned to where it rightfully belongs – locally! You had agreed, only to retract 8 weeks later, leaving children anxious and families disenfranchised, with uncertainty.

Furthermore, we strongly disagree with your statement that anyone opposed to Executive Order 251 does not care for the safety of children. Brick Township Public Schools administration and staff continue to demonstrate time and again that safety is our number one priority. Starting the new year under the auspices of local control, with proactive protocols in place we are prepared to provide a safe learning environment for students and staff, simultaneously supporting effective education and the social-emotional, health, safety and well-being of all, utilizing an optional mask plan. So, while we disagree on Executive Order 251, we also disagree that those who oppose it do not hold the safety and well-being of students and staff as a top priority.

As always, Brick Township Public Schools Board will continue to comply with all State mandates as our Oath of Office requires. But, as it pertains to Executive Order 251, we do so with a heavy heart for our students and community members as this mandate impedes their voices, freedom of choice, social justice, and equity.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Wohlrab
President, Brick Township Board of Education

cc: M. Gagliardi, Vice-President, Brick Township Board of Education
V. Pakala, BOE Member, Brick Township Board of Education
N. Siebert, BOE Member, Brick Township Board of Education
D. Haffner, BOE Member, Brick Township Board of Education
M. Parker, BOE Member, Brick Township Board of Education
M. Blandina, BOE Member, Brick Township Board of Education

Dr. Thomas Farrell, Superintendent, Brick Township Public School District