

## NEW JERSEY SENATE

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May 5, 2022

The Honorable Phil Murphy  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy,

Life for most New Jerseyans has finally started to return to normal following the end of New Jersey's public health emergency two months ago. Mask mandates have largely disappeared, vaccine passports are gone, and social distancing restrictions are little more than a memory.

Some public and private sector workers, however, remain subject to burdensome, unnecessary, and illogical pandemic restrictions that were imposed by you through executive order and never repealed.

For example, you continue to require workers in health care and congregate care settings, including prisons and nursing homes, to be vaccinated and boosted. You also continue to require unvaccinated teachers to submit to weekly COVID-19 testing, even as the fear of outbreaks in schools and elsewhere has faded away.

With regard to your ongoing vaccine mandates, we have heard from nursing and group home operators that the mandate is making it extremely difficult for them to maintain sufficient numbers of staff to care for their patients and residents.

Given the reduced severity of recent strains of COVID-19, the availability of effective therapeutics, and widespread vaccine-induced and naturally-acquired immunity, facility operators have warned that a far greater threat is posed to the vulnerable people in their care by a shortage of skilled workers than by unvaccinated staff.

In the case of prisons, you have imposed a vaccine mandate on corrections officers and other employees, but not on inmates themselves. How does it make sense that prisoners have more rights under your executive orders than the public servants we trust to guard them? It doesn't.

Further, regarding the efficacy of mandating boosters, a pair of important studies released last week indicate that the boosters required by your executive orders offer little protection against the Omicron variant that is prevalent today.

A substantial study of 130,000 people conducted by Yale University "did not detect an additional benefit of receiving a third booster dose" for protection against Omicron. A separate study from Canada similarly found that more than two vaccine doses "may be of marginal incremental value" for protecting previously-infected individuals against Omicron. Approximately 60% of the population has had COVID-19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and falls into that group.

Given these many concerns, we believe there is absolutely no basis to continue to threaten employees with termination for refusing to comply with your vaccine mandate. We urge you to lift the vaccine mandate immediately.

With regard to the weekly COVID-19 testing requirement for unvaccinated teachers, school staff, and school bus drivers, the woefully outdated and burdensome mandate that persists is inconsistent with current needs.

According to the State's COVID-19 dashboard, nearly 7 million of the approximately 9.2 million New Jersey residents have received the primary course of a vaccine and are considered fully vaccinated, while nearly 8 million have received at least one dose.

Additionally, nearly 2 million PCR-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey have been reported on the dashboard. It's likely that millions of additional infections were diagnosed through rapid home tests and never reported, or were never identified at all due to a lack of testing or being asymptomatic. As stated above, the CDC now reports that 60% of our total population, including 75% of children, has been infected at some point since the start of the pandemic.

Based on the data that your administration and the CDC has reported, we know that most New Jerseyans have either had COVID-19 or received a full series or partial course of vaccination, or both, with some resultant level of immunity across the overwhelming majority of our population.

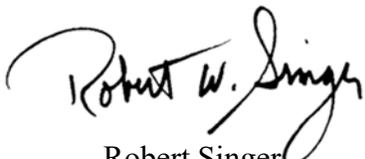
As a result, the ability of a single sick person to cause a mass outbreak or shut down a school, or anywhere else for that matter, is virtually nonexistent today.

Since preventing the kind of disruption that's now unlikely to school communities was the stated intention of the weekly test mandate for unvaccinated teachers and school employees, we believe the mandate should be lifted immediately.

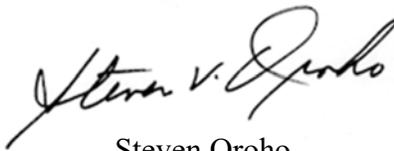
In conclusion, we believe there is no reason for you to continue to deny our valued teachers, health care workers, nursing home aides, and corrections officers the opportunity to join the rest of New Jersey in moving on from the pandemic.

They deserve that opportunity. You can give it to them by lifting the mandates.

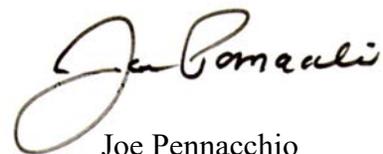
Sincerely,



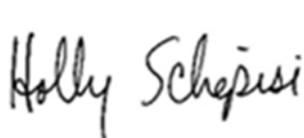
Robert Singer  
Deputy Leader



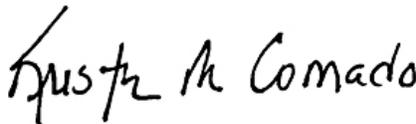
Steven Oroho  
Leader



Joe Pennacchio  
Deputy Leader



Holly Schepisi  
Deputy Conference Leader



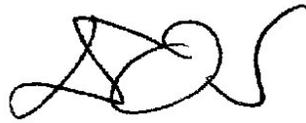
Kristin Corrado  
Conference Leader



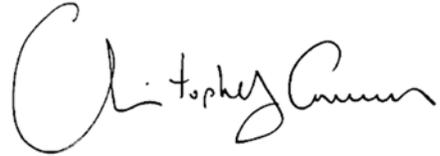
Anthony M. Bucco  
Whip



Michael Doherty  
Ranking Member – Judiciary



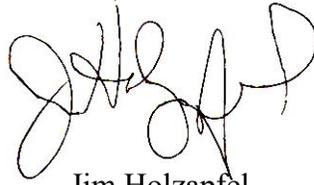
Declan O'Scanlon  
Budget Officer



Christopher Connors  
Senator – District 9



Edward Durr  
Senator – District 3



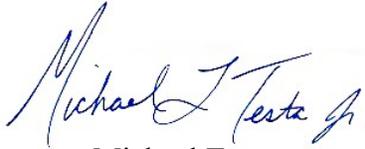
Jim Holzapfel  
Senator – District 10



Vince Polistina  
Senator – District 2



Jean Stanfield  
Senator – District 8



Michael Testa  
Senator – District 1



Samuel Thompson  
Senator – District 12