

**Republican Leader Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Oversight & Investigations Hearing  
“Americans in Need: Responding to the  
National Mental Health Crisis”  
February 17, 2022  
*As Prepared for Delivery***

**MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN CHILDREN**

Today’s hearing is long overdue.

Our kids are in crisis.

A 2020 survey of 3,300 high schoolers found about one-third of them unhappy and depressed...

...from March 2020 to October 2020, mental health related emergency department visits increased 24 percent for children ages 5 to 11 and 31 percent for those ages 12 to 17...

...and we have seen about a two-and-a-half-fold increase in emergency department visits for suicidal ideation and self-harm among children under the age of 18.

Why?

Not because of a virus that poses very little risk to children...

The reason... and I want to be very clear about this... is government’s response to COVID.

**GOVERNMENT TO BLAME**

School closures...

Forced masking...

Lockdowns and isolation... all contributed to this mental health crisis.

Power-drunk politicians and unelected public health bureaucrats are to blame.

Schools **MUST** be open for in-person learning with **NO** masks. **PERIOD.**

We must retire this notion of “virtual learning”? They’re **NOT** learning. If a school goes “virtual” it is **CLOSED.**

Kids need to be in school to learn... to socialize... to develop emotionally.

Children aren’t in the classroom to be treated like vectors of disease.

Forced masking – which undermines the benefits of being in the classroom – cannot be a condition for in-person learning anymore.

Look to our international partners...

Europe CDC does **NOT** recommend young kids mask in schools...

The WHO and UNICEF both recommend **AGAINST** masking children under 5, citing the “safety and overall interest of the child” ... and when considering masks for children ages 6-11, they actually consider other factors, like ability to learn and socialize.

I’ve raised this many times with CDC Director Walensky.

She is narrowly focused on just COVID – a virus that poses a lower risk to **unvaccinated** children than some fully vaccinated adults.

And she continues to rely on discredited studies to force her masking agenda on kids.

Just this week, when I asked her what data she relies on for forcing masks in schools, she cited the flawed Arizona study to me **THREE** times.

What have experts said of this study?

That it is so unreliable it should never have been entered into the public discourse... and that you cannot learn **ANYTHING** from it about masking in schools.

So why does she refuse to budge?

Is it because of her corrupt relationship with Randi Weingarten and teachers unions?

Maybe it is political, and she is simply following directions from the Biden White House.

I do not know why she continues to stand in the way of a normal childhood for millions of children... but I do know it is **NOT** because of science.

## **HYPOCRISY**

As is the case with much of these COVID policies.

If they were following the science, we wouldn't see the same Democrat politicians imposing mask mandates on children as young as two go mask-less at night clubs when they "feel the spirit"...

...or force a room full of children to mask so they can take a mask-less photo-op...

...or travel to Republican-led states to enjoy freedom.

Just this week, we saw how ridiculous these policies really are.

We saw tens of thousands of people enjoy the Super Bowl unmasked in LA – but for kids in the same city? They are forced to continue to mask.

How can ANYONE justify this?

And suddenly Democrat-led states and cities are lifting their mandates.

These decisions are NOT based on science... they are motivated by political science.

Let us not forget that just six months ago, Biden's Department of Education opened civil rights investigations into five Republican-led states who were fighting for children to attend school unburdened by masks.

Have you seen the same actions taken against any of these Democrat-led states or cities? We haven't.

## **UNMASK CHILDREN**

I understand that updated mask guidance from the CDC is coming.

Any updates must unmask our children. There's no excuse for why they are always last for restrictions to be lifted on them.

There are millions of frustrated parents across this country. They are making their voices heard.

I speak for all of them... and for my own son who is still masked in his school.

Children are the future. We cannot allow for arrogance and bad policies that sacrifice a generation.

History will remember those who caused this suffering.... and history will remember those who silenced our children and held them back.

Republicans have stood on the side of parents and their kids...

.... and I can promise you we will continue our fight until **EVERY** child can be in school, unmasked to learn, thrive, and be free.