

STATE OF HAWAII
BOARD OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

May 5, 2022

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Catherine Payne
Chairperson, Board of Education

AGENDA ITEM: Presentation on universal indoor masking in public schools

At its July 15, 2021 meeting, the Board of Education (“Board”) adopted a resolution, which, among other things, stated that the Hawaii State Department of Health (“DOH”) is the designated public health authority and directed the Department of Education (“Department”) to continuously work with and rely on DOH for advice and guidance on COVID-19 related health matters. Specifically, lines 134-147 of the resolution stated:

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board considers the Department of Health to be the State of Hawaii’s designated public health authority and the sole source of expertise on COVID-19 for state departments and agencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board directs the Department to continuously work with and rely on the Department of Health for any and all updated and current advice and guidance on all COVID-19-related health matters affecting the Department’s operations as the Department of Health deems necessary, including guidance on social distancing, face masks, and ventilation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board urges the Department of Health to commit to providing timely, accurate, and up-to-date advice and guidance to the Department to allow it to operate with maximum flexibility while ensuring the health and safety of thousands of students, families, and employees[.]”¹

¹ The Board’s July 15, 2021 resolution is available here:
<https://boe.hawaii.gov/Documents/2021%20Opening%20of%20Schools%20Resolution%20%28final%29.pdf>

Governor David Ige's last emergency proclamation with a statewide face covering requirement, requiring all individuals to wear face coverings when in public settings was issued on January 26, 2022 and expired on March 25, 2022.²

The Department provides the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidance for School Year 2021-22 for schools based on guidance from DOH.³ The Department last revised this document on March 10, 2022.

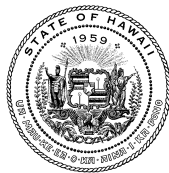
There were a number of communications sent out from schools and Interim Superintendent Keith Hayashi during the 2021-2022 school year. The most recent was a letter to parents from Interim Superintendent Hayashi dated April 18, 2022, attached as **Exhibit A**. This letter stated that the Department would "continue to implement universal indoor masking in schools through Friday, May 27, 2022 (last day for teachers)."

² Governor Ige's Emergency Proclamation Related to COVID-19 (Omicron Variant) is available at: https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2201143-ATG_Emergency-Proclamation-Related-to-COVID-19-Omicron-Variant-distribution-signed.pdf

³ The Department's COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidance for School Year 2021-22 is available at: <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/DOE%20Forms/COVID-19%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Guidance.pdf>

Exhibit A

April 18, 2022 Letter from Interim Superintendent Keith Hayashi



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

April 18, 2022

Aloha Parents and Guardians,

As we near the end of the school year, I would like to thank you for your continuous support and cooperation throughout this challenging year. Keeping our schools open and safe has been a collective effort and I am grateful for all that our families have done for our school communities.

I understand that there are different perspectives regarding the Hawai'i State Department of Education's (HIDOE) indoor masking in schools. Here are the latest updates:

- While we are eager to return to normalcy, we will continue to implement universal indoor masking in schools through Friday, May 27, 2022 (last day for teachers).
- With extensive scientific literature supporting the effectiveness of masking to reduce COVID-19 transmission in schools and other settings, the state Department of Health (DOH) still highly recommends that masks be worn indoors at all times at schools and emphasizes layered mitigation measures to keep our schools, students and staff safe.
- Under DOH's guidance for K-12 schools, individual close contact identification, and notification and quarantine of in-school exposures is no longer required — only if universal indoor masking is implemented. This major shift in quarantine guidance aligns with our ongoing priority of maintaining in-person learning students.
- Please stay tuned for updated health and safety guidance for our HIDOE summer programs, which will be shared at a later date.

We have been working very closely with DOH since the beginning of the pandemic and this partnership has kept our schools safe and open for in-person learning through the height of the pandemic. As we cautiously transition back to normal, we continue to rely on the guidance and expertise of our local health officials.

Mahalo again for your continued support of our Hawai'i public schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith T. Hayashi".

Keith T. Hayashi
Interim Superintendent

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