



MEETING NOTES

Meeting Notes are not official until voted on by the Board of Education at its following Regular Meeting.

A1 President called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

A2 Members present: Mrs. Crowley, Mrs. Long, Mrs. Murdoch, and Mr. Perry. Mr. Vorst attended via Zoom.

A3 The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

B PROGRAMS / PRESENTATIONS

B1 Embrace, Empower, Inspire Award Winners

Mr. Cliff Hetzel introduced Jennifer Carter, Bus Driver, to the Board. She has been a bus driver for the district for twenty years and was nominated by her peers for being such a positive, spirited driver who is very supportive of her students. I'm very excited to present this award to Jennifer. I've had the opportunity to work with her on many projects, and she has always been fantastic and inspirational. Jennifer commented that being a bus driver is so much more than driving the bus. We set the tone every day. We are the first face they see when it comes to school. So, for me, it's so important to greet them every morning. Also, when you drive a special needs route, you get to know your kids because it's a smaller group of kids. So, this award is pretty special to me.

Mrs. Stacy Carter introduced Amanda Schaeffer, Art Teacher at the HUB. She lights up the day every day for our HUB kids. We received multiple nominations from students, parents, and staff members. She exhibits all of the qualities of a great teacher. My child was one of Amanda's students, and she came home every day with pride. The opportunities you provide our kids are unlike anything I've ever seen. Thank you for coming to work every day and giving a hundred percent to your students. We are lucky to have you.

C ROUTINES

C1 Mr. Stewart noted one addition to Item C4 on the agenda – January 15, 2022, Meeting notes. Mr. Perry pointed out a wide range of public participants separated by topic. He suggested the superintendent give the COVID-19 update following public participation regarding the mask mandate instead of waiting until the end of the meeting. This way, we would hear what everyone has to say, and then they could listen to your report without waiting until the end of the meeting. Mrs. Murdoch made a motion, and Mr. Perry seconded to move Item G3(a) to immediately following all public participation regarding the mask mandate. The remaining public participation speakers will follow the COVID-19 update. The motion passed 4-0.

C2 The Board of Education adopted the agenda as amended.

C3 The Board of Education approved the January 2022 Treasurer's Report.

C4 The Board of Education approved the minutes from the following meetings:
a. January 10, 2022 – Organizational meeting

- b. January 10, 2022 – Meeting notes
- c. January 10, 2022 – Regular meeting
- d. January 10, 2022 – Meeting notes
- e. January 15, 2022 – Retreat meeting
- f. January 15, 2022 – Meeting notes (*Addition noted above in Item C1.*)
- g. January 24, 2022 – Work session
- h. January 24, 2022 – Meeting notes
- i. January 31, 2022 – Special meeting

D PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Board of Education appreciates citizen interest in meetings of the board. This place on the agenda is set aside to hear comments from visitors. When called, please go to the microphone so that remarks may be clearly heard and recorded. You must give your name and limit comments to three minutes. Comments must be respectful and professional in nature. Board members may or may not ask questions or make comments. No board member has the power or authority to act for the board; therefore, no response from an individual board member should be interpreted as an official action of the board. Portions of this meeting are being recorded.

NOTE: The audio recording of the meeting was difficult to decipher due to background noise. You may see many unfinished sentences throughout the public participation.

Alisha Duke

Good evening, my name is Alisha Duke, and I have two children in Hilliard City School District. Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. As we are all aware, there have been mandates and restrictions being lifted left and right recently regarding masks. I am here to strongly encourage the board to make masking optional for our students and staff effective immediately. We are two years into covid, which is now on an endemic path and still masking our kids. Hilliard parents have asked for months to remove this mandate and put health decisions back into our hands. After all, those who would like to have their children wear a mask are not being stopped. I would encourage you to please allow staff to have optional masking as well since I know several teachers who would appreciate that but are fearful to speak up at this point. All students and staff in K-12 have the opportunity to be vaccinated. Hospitals are no longer overwhelmed. Omicron ran its course, and not only was it not as deadly, but it didn't last as long or overwhelm hospitals either. What else are we waiting for to remove the mask mandates? There is no longer a reason they are necessary. This can't continue forever. There has to be a point where we learn to live with this virus and move forward. We have already reached that point and passed it. There are entire countries eliminating mask and vaccine mandates, not to mention states here in the US. Surrounding districts have also eliminated mandatory masks, some of which haven't had them mandatory this entire school year. I found out that Olentangy made them optional. Upper Arlington has changed their decision also. Jonathan Alder hasn't had a mandate all year.

Many districts have had the opportunity for exemption, most of which have been approved, and they are doing just fine. Approved exemptions have not even been the case here. Last month, Mr. Abraham mentioned that all but one medical exemption had been approved, but he failed to mention that dozens of other types of exemptions were denied. The elimination of masking policies in surrounding districts is effective no later than the end of this month, but many begin immediately. I expect our board and superintendent when presented with practical points, to make that decision as well. As stated by a governor recently, and I realize this might not be popular, it's not medical science that has changed; it's

political science. Please stop and consider the truth of that statement for a moment. Massive sporting events take place with thousands of unmasked people attending, but we haven't unmasked our children, students, or staff. They attend classes with the same people every day. Even middle and high school students switching classes generally have the same students in each of those classes day in and day out, but we haven't used logic to take away the masks. I don't know how much you've seen the kids' masks after school, but they get quite gross. One of my daughters sneezed in hers last month because she felt like she wasn't allowed to remove it to sneeze into a tissue. So she breathed in a snot-covered mask all day at school. I should have the right, as her parent, to decide that option is not something we consider healthy in our house. Thank you for your time.

Amanda Powers

Good evening; my name is Amanda Powers. It's hard to accept that you damaged your kids for nothing. It's hard to accept that you stole their prom, first day of kindergarten, sports, chances at athletic scholarships, and weeks and weeks of missed educational instruction. So, instead, you double-down to save face even if it costs our children dearly. After two years, instead of taking ownership and accepting what you have done wrong, you double-down because acknowledging your mistakes would mean acknowledging defeat, and that can be a difficult pill to swallow. According to the ODH website, less than 1% of kids have been hospitalized due to covid. However, according to the CDC, accidents are the leading cause of death among children. So, maybe we should cancel recess, gym, and all athletics. Choosing to live life means choosing risks. When the mitigation of certain risks becomes more dangerous than the risk itself, it is time to reassess.

When did it become a crime to want to breathe fresh air, to see others' smiles, to give a friend a hug or high-five? Parents deserve the freedom to make decisions for their kids based on actual facts, not speculation. I have been asking for data from the board and superintendent for two years to show me the reasoning behind your mandates, yet nothing has been provided. Masks have become a psychological blanket for a small number of people and a way to continue the environment of fear. Masks should not be politicalized. Our children did not get to vote in the last election, but they have become the chess pieces in this mask game. You see restaurants, concerts, and sporting events packed with maskless spectators, yet we still mask our children at school. As parents, all we are asking for is choice. It's been two years; the data is in.

Over half of the total population of Ohio's school children are not required to wear masks. Masks are political theater and to say otherwise is pure ignorance. Masks are a demonstration of political beliefs. The top six schools with the highest cumulative covid rate (20%-23%) in the greater Columbus area are masked. The two schools with less than 5% cumulative covid rates are unmasked. The damage that has been done to our youth has been caused by the reaction to this virus, not the virus itself. You do not know what is better for my child than I do. I am not directing this statement to just the board and superintendent. I am also addressing all parents who say the problem lies solely with the parents and not the kids. So, you need to ask yourself, is masking our students in the name of public health or public harm? Thank you.

Robert Squier

Good evening, my name is Robert Squier, and I am a teacher at Station Sixth Grade. I'm here to ask you to consider dropping the mask mandate humbly. While I understand it was implemented to slow the transmission of COVID-19 during the delta and omicron waves, we can now clearly see that cases are dropping at an astounding rate. During the January 24 meeting, it was noted there were 495 total cases in our schools in the previous week. According to the Hilliard City Schools COVID-19 dashboard, there were

43 total cases this past week, averaging less than 2 cases per building. If we follow current trends from Ohio, Franklin County, and Hilliard, this number will continue to drop. We also see these trends from the CATS data. Staff absences are also down to around 4.5-5% and dropping each day, following a peak of 16.68%. For context, the predetermined threshold for excessive staff absences is 6%.

We also see a decline in student absences and nurse visits for flu and covid-like illnesses. As a teacher, I want my students to feel a sense of belonging. I know some will feel safe wearing a mask, but others will have a better sense of belonging when not required to wear a mask. Please consider following in the footsteps of our neighboring districts such as Olentangy, New Albany, Pickerington, and Upper Arlington and allowing students and staff the choice to wear or not wear a mask. I would like to read an excerpt from an open letter posted in *Time* magazine by Dr. Jennifer Knips. I also emailed the entire letter to all of you. “There is abundant evidence showing the lack of efficacy of some of these measures such as masking in schools. Medical knowledge is constantly changing. However, there is no significant evidence that the kind of masking such as non-medical masks, common in schools, is worth it. An Arizona study frequently cited by the CDC director as evidence for continued masking in schools has been thoroughly dismantled. More and more experts have concluded that evidence for masks in schools doesn’t hold up to scrutiny. Several studies show a minimal reduction in COVID-19 transmission with masks in schools, but the results were not statistically significant.” I would like to thank the board for their time and consideration. I know this is a difficult decision, and I’ll respect the outcome of your decision. Thank you.

Kate Lemaster

Good evening, my name is Kate Lemaster, and I have a third-grade son at Darby Creek and an incoming kindergartener for next school year. What you may not know about me is that my sons will be the fourth generation to graduate from Hilliard City Schools. I graduated in '03, my parents graduated in '69, my grandmother in the class of '40, and my sisters graduated in 1990 and '95, along with many cousins, aunts, nieces, and nephews. Why am I bringing this up? I bring this up because my family is deeply rooted in the Hilliard City School District and community. We take pride in this district. I’m not some “Karen” mom standing here just to speak out about my own agenda. I am a mom who wants to see her kids wear the Hilliard blue like I did. However, I don’t think that is going to happen. I am second-guessing my home here in Hilliard because the district is rapidly changing to a district I don’t recognize anymore. I’m seeing my friends, neighbors, and family move out of the Hilliard City Schools and move their kids to private schools.

I’m also here to speak out for other parents who don’t feel like they can speak out at the board meeting. Stephanie White, a parent at Horizon and Station, states she is far more afraid of what wearing masks are doing to my children than what covid is doing. It is time to drop the charade. Erin Kitosky, the parent of a future kindergartener at Washington, says she is watching this closely as my oldest is starting kindergarten next school year. If Hilliard does not drop the mandate, we won’t be attending. Stephanie Totch, a parent of 2 at Davidson, says my sons have lost two years of high school careers to restrictions. The school system has overstepped its boundaries, and it’s time to give back our freedoms. Ellie Kattenhorn, the parent of three, states her daughter can’t stand wearing a mask to the point that she has had full-blown anxiety attacks. This year for Christmas, she wrote to Santa saying that all she wanted for Christmas was for covid to be over and not wear a mask at school. Lacy Nicole, the parent of one, said that her daughter had to write an “I have a dream” speech for black history month. Her speech was, “I have a dream that masks would leave us alone. This is going to make a big difference, so I hope it comes true. Also, I want to let some of my friends come up on the stage. Hi, I’m Ava’s friend, and I’m here for the right that we want no masks, no masks. Okay, calm down, everyone; we’re going to pray. Dear God, please take us to a place where there are no masks; amen.”

Board, are you ready to grant these children their prayers? Now is the time to remove these masks and give parents a choice. If you want to send your child in masks, then great do it and if you don't, don't. It's our choice, not yours. Thank you.

Andrew Wagner

I am Andrew Wagner, a junior. I have been in the Hilliard City School District for eleven years. I have never ever faced as much drama over wearing masks. The main point I want to make is that masks should not be worn. Most students and teachers don't wear them correctly. They are usually below their nose. There are some people who do not wear them at all. If you go to a sporting event, please do not wear masks. No more masks, please.

Melanie Wagner

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to address the board and other staff in attendance. My name is Melanie Wagner, and I have two sons in the Hilliard School District. I want to make clear that I believe masks should be optional for all students and staff but will speak specifically to our experience in attempting to obtain a religious exemption for my sons. The district presented two opportunities for mask exemption, medical and religious. We pursued a religious-based protection exemption. I filled out the required forms and submitted them for approval. Our sons' exemptions were promptly denied. The exemption request that we attest to an established, sincerely held, religious requirement that does not permit your student to wear a mask. The ninth commandment states, "thou shall not bear false witness." In other words, thou shall not lie.

It is my summation that after many peer-reviewed studies, the masks provide very little to no protection from COVID-19, making any argument to the contrary false. Recently, Hilliard staff and teachers attended two professional development sessions presented by a representative of Kaleidoscope Youth Center. Attendees were introduced to gender unicorn and were sent home with gender unicorn coloring sheets to fill out themselves. Because in a perfect world, one should be able to identify oneself by using at least twenty-seven genders. The representative went on to say there is no such thing as biological sex. There is, but it's complicated. This, of course, will be a topic for another time. My point being, if we live in a society where there are some who sincerely believe there are twenty-seven genders and there is no such thing as biological sex – both of which teachers and staff in the Hilliard City Schools are expected to affirm, then it would seem offensively unreasonable for you not to allow my family to sincerely believe that being forced into wearing a mask (for the sole purpose of protecting oneself from a virus) would force my children and any other child with common beliefs to actively participate in a lie. Something that goes strictly against the tenets of our faith. With all due respect, it doesn't matter how many degrees you have, your title, or the letters you have behind your name. There is not a single person in this room, this district, or this country that has the credentials or the authority to decide the depths of anyone's sincerely-held religious beliefs. There will come a day when I will give an account for my deeds on earth, desiring to hear "well done good and faithful servant," but that will be determined by God, not by man.

Sarah Myers

Good evening everybody. My name is Sarah Myers, and I have a first-grader at Washington. At the last meeting, I spoke about the importance of our community for our student's mental health and how it meant to keep wearing masks to keep everyone together and care for the more at-risk among us. These are lessons we all want to model for our children. Tonight my focus is a little bit different. Although, I absolutely think we should continue to keep masking to care for the at-risk among us. Franklin County is still experiencing high transmission of the virus. But tonight, I want to commend the district for offering teachers a presentation by Kaleidoscope Youth Center, which focuses on serving LGBTQ youth. According

to a 2021 survey by the Trevor Project, 42% of LGBTQ youth between the ages of 12 and 24 seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and non-binary youth. This segment of our community depends heavily upon community support, and we want to be that for them.

There is an Instagram that was very active in June 2020 called “Dear HCSD.” I emailed the link to you. This account was created for students in marginalized communities to share their experiences within HCSD. I want to share a few passages from that account, but I strongly urge you to read the posts to hear directly from the students about their experiences. Many of the students said they heard derogatory slurs that were normalized or minimized. Many of them did not see teachers or staff address this behavior even when it happened in front of them. One student said, “I’m afraid to be myself. I’m living a false life at school.” Another student wrote, “Being out at Bradley sucks. Bradley is a toxic environment, and being in the closet is much safer when attending, which is really damaging to oneself.” Finally, a 2019 Davidson graduate said, “I was threatened to be stabbed, shot, and run over by a car by a student because of my sexuality. Three teachers saw him corner me and my friends in the cafeteria while telling us we deserved what happened during the Orlando gay club shooting. None of the teachers did anything. Thank you for the four most debilitating years of my life.”

I bring these stories up not because I want to put down teachers or staff. I know that it can be challenging for many people to know how to respond when they are presented with someone’s experience of trauma or witnessing something like that. It takes intentional, conscious training and practice, and even then, we still get it wrong sometimes. This is why presentations from organizations like Kaleidoscope are so important and valuable, and I hope they continue.

Erin Reilly-Sanders

Good evening, my name is Erin Reilly-Sanders, and I’m a parent of a child at J.W. Reason Elementary. Case rates are going down, and we are all thrilled and excited. I don’t think there is a single person in this room who wouldn’t agree with that. I know that some states are turning over mask mandates not at the state level but to school districts, and we have that flexibility here. In fact, we have the flexibility to do that on a school or classroom level, which is amazingly fantastic. I also want to remind people that we are not in the clear yet. I brought some visual aids with me today, and these are our county cases up here. I sent all of you the framework developed by a number of scientists and doctors that says here are our cases, and we want to get to 50 cases per 100,000 people for seven days. This is even high CDC transmission. We’re in an area where they are saying cancel your athletics. It’s too dangerous to do stuff like that. So, we are on our way down, but we still have a long way to go to where we can remove masks with assurances of relative safety. If the superintendent wanted to remove that mandate sooner, we would expect to see sources of who is recommending that, particularly groups of scientists working together. We can also work on vaccinations. We could try to get to 85%, but we have been delayed on getting our youngest children (six months old to preschool age) vaccinated. They don’t even have a choice there, and I know we do run preschools here. Our elementary school vaccines are way behind, and I really hope that we can work together as a community to improve both of these things to where we need to be. Let’s get our vaccination rate up and our case rate down so that we can continue learning in person with healthy kids in school. These recommendations aren’t even very conservative. Dr. Jetelina considers herself moderate risk-tolerant, and they are actually more progressive than the CDC guidelines.

I also want to mention that I had a conference with Mrs. Herson, and I’m impressed with the types of professional development the district is offering. Connecting with psychology research helps teachers understand why kids may be acting the way they are and provide ways for teachers to help them that

address their needs as people. I'm astounded. Also, listening to Kaleidoscope, an excellent community organization about gender expression and identity, connects teachers with research about suicide prevention and anti-bullying, something dearly needed in our community. Thank you for offering those professional development opportunities and keeping our kids safe in the school environment.

John Kizer

Thanks for the opportunity to speak. My name is John Kizer, and I'm a father to a seven-year-old at Britton Elementary and a four-year-old at the Hilliard City Preschool. Frankly, things are great overall. My son was nearly nonverbal two years ago. When he started at the preschool, he had an IEP with major speech and occupational therapies. A couple of weeks ago, he told me in clearly understandable words that the neighbor could understand, "Dad, did you know at school I use my imagination to create art?" This really blew me away, and my daughter is also progressing really well with targeted help. I am so happy about these things.

On the mask topic, entities, in general, are climbing over each other, trying to help maximize the physical health outcomes of the entire general population. I believe bodies like this are the ones that have the charge to advocate for maximizing the educational and social development outcomes for our children. I'm not going to get into litigating the studies around the effectiveness of masks. If you look at controlled studies, they generally say that cloth masks are worthless and even professional surgical masks don't change spread much. My biggest point is, what are we trading off for whatever benefit kids wearing masks brings? There is a summary by *Psychology Today*, a mainstream publication, recapping the research that both adults and children show impaired ability to recognize emotions when wearing masks. Specifically, masks make positive expressions seem less happy, suggesting children might be less likely to perceive positive emotions. Wearing masks may impact processes working toward emotional development and are more pronounced the younger the person. Adults are the least impacted, teenagers a little more impacted, and younger children are impacted a lot more. I respectfully ask the board to consider that we are currently mandating an intervention where the negative impact is disproportionately toward children's development. It feels like the positive impact is almost exclusively to willfully, unvaccinated adults. Our teachers work hard to create a positive social learning environment.

Leslie Drexel

I'm Leslie Drexel. So, why are we putting our kids through harmful mitigation methods that claim to solve problems that just don't exist? What's the actual risk of covid to kids? ...from the Ohio Department of Health online mortality database may surprise you. There have been just nine total deaths from covid in school-age children in Ohio. Sadly, every month in Ohio, 107 school-age children die, but just one of those deaths is from covid. Just 1% of total deaths in children ages 0-19 is from covid. That's 27 deaths out of 2,672 total deaths from all causes. Just 0.0006% of covid cases in children ages 0-19 result in death. So, the truth is covid isn't dangerous to kids. Children ages 0-5 are eleven times more likely to die in a car accident and twelve times more likely to die from drowning. Children ages 5-14 are 10.5 times more likely to die in a car accident and 6.5 times more likely to die from suicide. Given these facts, why aren't we spending billions of dollars trying to prevent the other 99% of childhood deaths? Just imagine how many kids' lives we could have saved if we taught more kids to swim, invest in better car seats and education on how to use them, or classes to help parents deal with stress. Why do we focus on the 1%? Do the other thousands of kids' lives not matter? What happened to "if it saves just one life?" Why the hypocrisy? Where is your cost-benefit analysis? Where is the study that shows the harm you're doing to our kids by masking them outweighs the damage being done to them? I have the answer. They don't exist. You all ran for office to help our children, not harm them. We hired you to be advocates for our children. What specifically is your rationale and justification for forcing masks on kids? Do they actually work? Even the

CDC is admitting cloth, and surgical masks don't work against covid. Nobody has present real-live data until recently, which you all have a copy of. In a survey of data from twenty-six districts in Ohio, the actual data indicates there is absolutely zero reduction in the number of cases in districts with masks. There is no correlation between case counts and mask-wearing. As parents, we know what's best for our kids.

Nobody else has the right to tell us otherwise unless they can prove it is necessary. We are tired of some saying that masking doesn't harm our kids and teaches our kids to be resilient. That's irrelevant. As Mary Katharine Ham said, it's not a kid's job to be resilient. It's the parent's job to be resilient for them to spare them from our fears and worries. The longer we abdicate, the more damage we do. Free to make choices that are best for our kids is the default. In the absence of any data showing any of this works, all restrictions must be removed. You have taken two of the most important years away from many young children, and it needs to stop. As Governor DeSantis recently stated, medical science hasn't changed; political science has changed.

Scott Robinson

Good evening. Thank you for your time. My name is Scott Robinson, and I'm the parent of two high schoolers at Davidson. One of the advantages of going later in the program is most of the things I wanted to say have already been said. I'm here to add my voice to the parents crying out for an end to this mask mandate. Covid, unfortunately, is here to stay. It's not going away. At some point, everybody is going to get it, but we can treat it. We have vaccines and therapeutics—two good reasons to stop with this mandatory mask mandate. There is no reason we can't treat covid like we treat a cold and the flu. I hear people say it's all about the kids if we could only save one life. If that's the case, why do our school buses go faster than ten miles per hour? Because, after all, it would save just one life if we slow them down. But nobody talks about things like that because it's totally and utterly ridiculous, as is the mask mandate. In case anybody noticed, there was a big football game yesterday on national tv. About a hundred million people watched it, and it seemed like many people were in the stadium sitting shoulder-to-shoulder without masks. The adults at the super bowl were not wearing masks, but we put masks on children who are the least likely to suffer the ill effects of this disease. It makes zero sense. As other people pointed out, neighboring school districts have already come to the reality that this is fruitless and have done away with their mask mandates.

Finally, I have talked to the superintendent's office a couple of times, and they told me they go on various studies such as the CDC, Franklin County Board of Health, and Ohio Board of Health. I pointed out that a few weeks ago, the CDC stated that cloth masks basically don't do anything, and I was rebuffed. They said they go on other studies. So, I did a little digging and found that since this pandemic began, there have been only two published studies that were randomized and controlled. One was from a group of Danish researchers published in November 2020. They found there was no significant effect between masks and no masks. The second study was released in September 2021 and was a joint effort between Stanford Medicine and Yale University. It found there was an 11% improvement with surgical masks.....but for cloth masks, no effect at all. It's time to end the mask mandate. Thank you, again, for your time.

Abby Huwer

Good evening, my name is Abby Huwer, and my children attend the Alton Darby Creek Campus. I'm speaking today to request that masks become optional for all students, effective immediately. It's time for parents to have the right to decide whether or not their child wears a mask to school. As of last Wednesday, February 10, 2022, 71.4% of school districts in Ohio have a mask policy that is optional for all students. My children are no longer required to wear a mask in any other facet of their life, including Hilliard Schools after-hours activities, sports, birthday parties, family functions, and businesses throughout

Hilliard. However, our children are mandated to wear a mask during normal school hours. I provided you a report posted on the CDC website on February 4, 2022, titled “Effectiveness of Face Mask or Respirator Use in Indoor Public Settings for Prevention of SARS-CoV-2 Infection – California, February-December 2021.” It concludes with the statement, “Wearing a mask was associated with lower adjusted odds of a positive test compared to never wearing a face-covering bur was not statistically significant.” In other words, these measures could not be said to be effective. If there are any studies with only children as subjects that show masking is effective in schools and prevents the spread of covid, could you please provide us with that information? Many large school districts throughout Ohio, including local districts like Olentangy, Pickerington, New Albany, the Catholic Diocese, and Upper Arlington, have made masks optional or will do so in the coming weeks. I’m asking Hilliard to do the same. It’s time to give our children normalcy, not only at home and in public but at school where they are growing as learners. I believe our children deserve the same learning experiences as 74.4% of districts in Ohio. It doesn’t make sense the children less than five miles from my house are given the option to wear a mask, and mine are not. In addition, over one hundred million people watched a completely normal super bowl last night in a packed, indoor stadium of 75,000 fans with almost no one wearing a mask. How can any parent in this country be forced to send their children to school in a mask today? How long are you going to make our children cover their faces seven hours a day while three-quarters of this state allow children and families to make that choice for themselves? I hope you take into account the rapidly changing landscape of similar schools throughout this state and give Hilliard families a right to choose. You said December 1st you were going to go mask optional. Can we implement this tonight? Thank you for your time.

Lisa Chaffee

Good evening. For two years now, we’ve been hearing follow the science, follow the science. Well, let me give you some science. First, surgeons have never worn masks to slow respiratory viruses but instead to stop bodily fluids from landing in his/her mouth or nose and to stop their own spit from getting into their patient. Again, they do not wear them to stop the transmission of respiratory viruses. At this point, almost all of us have had covid. In a collaborative study between Duke University and the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, they discovered that among eleven school districts with nearly one hundred thousand staff and students, there were zero instances of children passing covid to adults. Also, they found only thirty-two cases of kid-to-kid or adult-to-adult transmission over a nine-week period. What we do know is that wearing masks has proved to cause the following problems – an increase in breathing resistance, an increase in blood carbon dioxide, a decrease in blood oxygen, an increase in heart rate, a decrease in cardiopulmonary capacity, an increase in respiratory rate, difficulty breathing, headache, dizziness, drowsiness, decrease in empathy perception, impaired skin barrier function with acne, itching, skin lesions, increase in cavities and oral infections, an increase in anxiety, a reluctance to go to school, and impaired learning. Having our children wear these masks is unconstitutional, but more importantly, it is unethical.

The cure has become worse than the disease. It’s time to stop the mandates. If other people want to have their children wear masks, so be it. Don’t mask my child. My child has been forced to go through ungodly amounts of blood tests, autoimmune workups, and all they have found that’s making him sick – prolonged mask-wearing. By the end of every week, he’s got migraines and extreme fatigue. He cannot concentrate. Compound that with ADHD, my son is going through hell, and I know he’s not the only one going through it. One last thing, if our kids can participate in extracurricular activities without wearing a mask, they can be in school together without wearing a mask.

Nicole Fernandez

Hello, my name is Nicole Fernandez. I've been teaching in Hilliard for nine years since I graduated from the Ohio State University and earned a master's degree from Boston with additional hours. I'll be making a case for freedom of student choice in mask-wearing in school, which is supported with research done by highly educated doctors and peer-reviewed scientific studies. Much of what I was going to say has been said already, but I have a few more points I'd like to make. At this point, like any virus in the history of viruses, covid is becoming more and more similar to a common cold. We have got to learn to live with this and move forward as other states have done, such as Maine, Delaware, Oregon, New Jersey, and even New York. Why haven't we? The science shows that masks are ineffective in preventing the spread of covid and actually have detrimental effects. I have some QR codes with forty-seven various face mask studies that prove their ineffectiveness, thirty-two studies on face mask side effects and their implications, and another list of one hundred and fifty comparative studies and articles on mask ineffectiveness and harms. Some of these include mental health issues, lack of emotional and intellectual development, increases in allergies, detrimental effects to the immune system, a rise in bacterial infections and fungus of the mouth, and a decrease in oxygen blood levels to the brain. What implications should these have for our kids who we are making wear them all hours of the day during the school day? What damage has already been done? So, these show that mask wearers had significantly higher influenza-like illnesses than unmasked. Recently laundered masks (masks recently washed and worn for a day) were clinically studied and showed to carry strains that cause streptococcus pneumonia, tuberculosis, sepsis, meningitis, food poisoning, and diphtheria. The Mayo Clinic even warned that "a growing number of otherwise healthy people are developing life-threatening staph infections because of mask-wearing." This is because masks maintain bacteria in greater numbers and for longer periods of time, which increases the risk of those bacteria entering the respiratory system and/or bloodstream. And the relation of the mental health piece, I know that in the past two years, more of our students have been hospitalized due to depression than for covid, and I see it first-hand in my classroom every day.

I've never seen such anxiety, insecurity, lack of identity, and an overall attitude of apathy. It's not just the masks, but they clearly play a huge part in this. And, it's absolutely ridiculous to think otherwise. We're two years and fifteen days into flattening the curve. When will we stop punishing our children unnecessarily? At the super bowl, thousands of unmasked strangers crammed together. Yet we send our kids to school the next day, covering their faces, which were created in the image of God, blocking their flow of oxygen and taking away their freedom of choice. If you think this makes any sense whatsoever, you've deceived yourself to protect your ego. Hilliard has made it very clear that student choice is wildly important as we encourage students to choose their pronoun but then can't choose if they can wear a mask.

Nic Fernandez

Thank you, board, for letting me speak. I won't take three minutes of your time. My only credential is I'm married to that beautiful young educator, and for over a decade, I coached in Northeastern Ohio, so I've spent a long time working with young athletes. I just want to encourage you. I understand in the climate that we're in now in this country; it is very difficult to be in a position of leadership in the corporate world and in education. I want to commend you for you're doing. No matter what you do, you are going to upset people, and I understand that. I would encourage you to look at the data. I'm in risk management now. We have the last two years of data to look at. I understand fifteen days to flatten the curve simply because we were unsure of what this looked like. Now, we know what it looks like, and I would say that our decisions that we make now, we don't know what impacts they will have for our kids.

As my wife mentioned, there are psychological impacts to wearing masks. We do know what the risks are for our children to get covid. We don't know what this is going to do to them psychologically, emotionally, and physically to their development, to their health. So, I would encourage you to look at those QR codes that my wife spent a lot of time on. The other thing I would encourage you is that my art teacher wife has spent more time focusing on this type of stuff than a lot of doctors. In your position, I would encourage you to really dig in because your decisions have lasting impacts on the future of this country and the future of this amazing district. Thank you.

David Townsend

Thank you. Dear school board members, we want you to know that over the last year and a half, you have violated many laws and constitutional rights. Now, it is the parent's turn, and this is just the beginning. Did each of you on the school board take an oath to uphold the constitution of the state of Ohio and the constitution of the United States? If any of you answered no to any of these questions, I believe it is in your best interest to resign. Now for the two school board members who were on the board last year, if you said yes to all of these questions, I believe it is in your best interest to resign. Let me tell you why. You took an oath to uphold the constitutions, and where in the constitution does it say you can infringe on children's rights? Why did you allow a superintendent to impose a mask mandate, and how many rights did that violate? Were you aware the school was denying medical and religious exemptions for the mask mandate? If not, why not? It is your responsibility to oversee the school and all policies. So, if you did not know, you failed to perform your duties. If you knew, then you failed to uphold your oath. I ask you to resign. If you don't, that's okay too. We have a plan within the law to have the sheriff remove you from office. Feel free to go cozy up with the sheriff to get him not to remove you from office. We have a plan within the law for that.

In the coming weeks, there are going to be some demands asked of you, and one is the immediate termination of any use of masks. So, it is in your best interest to just check that one off tonight. This includes on buses. Now before you cry about the federal mandate of masks on buses, stop. Mandates are not laws and do not supersede either constitution. In regard to the demands that are coming soon, the mask mandate is just one of many instances in which each and every one of you on the school board has failed to uphold your oath. We will be notifying you personally of the laws, codes, and ethics you are breaking. Once you have been informed, you have three to five days to meet the demands. Parents, the best is yet to come.

G3 Superintendent's Update
a. COVID-19 Update

I am pleased to report to you that the recent trend of rapidly declining case numbers in the Hilliard City Schools continues. Let me remind you of where we have been since our return from winter break.

- The week of January 3, we had 587 total cases in the district (staff and students).
- The week of January 10, the number of cases climbed to 680.
- The week of January 17, our total cases declined to 500.
- The week of January 24, the number of cases declined to 240.
- The week of January 31, the number declined to 92 cases.
- The week of February 7, the total number of cases dropped to 51.

All of the other metrics we have discussed in recent weeks have improved dramatically as well. Our student daily attendance rates have returned to around 94%, which is about what we would expect

in any normal year. Teacher absences have decreased with our substitute teacher fill rate exceeding 90% every day last week. This has enabled us to allow teacher professional development and curriculum work during the school day. Similarly, attendance amongst our bus drivers has improved and has returned to normal levels after seeing an excess of twenty drivers out per day. This has allowed us to return to regular routing and eliminate double and triple routing. Our CATS data has also improved, with case rates per one hundred thousand dipping to less than 30% of what they were a few weeks ago. Additionally, the vaccination rate within our district remains in the highest category in the CATS reporting system exceeding 80%.

As you recall, in mid-November, I emailed our community to let them know that at that time, I believed the data was trending toward a point where it would be possible to allow individuals and families to determine whether or not wearing a mask in school was their best option. At that time, the point of my letter was to give parents ample time to get their students vaccinated if they wished to do so. Unfortunately, the omicron variant had other plans. This district, its teachers, students, and staff weathered that storm united in their efforts to keep our doors open. I am proud of all of them for their efforts. If there was a silver lining through this very challenging time, it was that it provided more time for families to get their students vaccinated if they wished to do so.

The decline in cases in our school district over the past four weeks is dramatic and sustained. We have now returned to the point where we were when I sent that email in November. While as I said, I am proud of the efforts of our staff, students, and families have undertaken to combat COVID-19 collectively. I believe the time has come to reconsider the requirement for universal masking in our schools. Just a little over a week ago, I shared that I believed we were headed in this direction with each of you. I believe tonight is the appropriate opportunity to announce a change regarding universal masking. In the week since nothing has occurred, that would change my opinion on this. Therefore, beginning Wednesday, February 16, we will no longer require masks to be worn in our schools. To be clear, any student or staff member who wishes to continue to wear a mask will be welcomed to do so. We will encourage students and staff to be mindful of their surroundings and respect the choices their peers and colleagues make relative to wearing a mask.

It is important that I point out here that the federal requirement to wear masks on school buses remains in place until March 18. We do not have the option to remove this requirement locally. As a result, all passengers on school buses will still be required to wear a mask while on the bus until the federal requirement expires.

I know that this decision will not be received well by some and that they will express their disagreement with it as they have every right to do. As an organization, we have been good soldiers in the fight against COVID-19. We have maintained this mitigation strategy long after many of the rest of the institutions in our society moved away from it. We did so because it was, at the time, the right thing to do. Now, I believe the right thing to do is transition away from requiring everyone to wear a mask and shift our community's focus to the great things going on in our classrooms. It will be extremely important we be patient and supportive of those in our community who disagree. This is an emotional topic, and some are genuinely concerned. With those concerns in mind, let me state that this announcement does not mean we will stop monitoring our data daily. We will continue to update our web page every Friday with the number of student and staff cases in each building. We will also continue to provide community and county data from the CATS team.

Additionally, any parent who wishes to provide their student with a KN95 mask can come to the district office at 2140 Atlas Street, and we will provide those masks at no charge. We will also continue to employ other mitigation strategies such as cleaning and proper ventilation. We will still ask families to monitor their students for symptoms and follow ODH guidance for when to keep students home from school. We also want families to notify our school nurses if a student tests positive for COVID-19. We know the best place for kids is in school in person full-time. All of our mitigation efforts have been aimed at ensuring this for our students and families.

Again, we are incredibly proud of the efforts of our collective community and are excited we have reached this point. Our goals have not changed, and we look forward to a rewarding spring for our students and staff. By continuing to work together, I know that we can make this happen.

Mrs. Murdoch told Mr. Stewart that he has her full support. Thank you for taking this step in helping our kids, the group least vulnerable to this virus, return to normalcy. As the world enters its third year of dealing with COVID-19, I appreciate the understanding that each families' circumstances are different. Therefore, parents are best positioned to weigh the potential risks and benefits of any COVID-19 mitigation measures. Although a definitive answer regarding the impact of wearing anything less than an N95 or KN95 mask remains elusive, more and more research is coming to light indicating that masking our kids in school has very little impact, if any, on the spread of COVID-19.

Furthermore, there's mounting evidence that masking children has an adverse impact on a student's academic, social and emotional development. Some even suggest that masking exacerbates the chances that a child will experience anxiety and depression, which are already at pandemic levels themselves. None of this is to say masks don't work, cause harm, or should not be worn. It is merely to say that the potential risks and benefits need to be weighed by each individual family. I want to be crystal clear, it is entirely within their rights, and no person should be judged based on their choices. The takeaway from tonight's decision should simply be that we have reached a stage in the coronavirus pandemic where all mitigation measures should be up to each individual and their family. Thank you for allowing every individual in this district the ability to make that very personal choice. Thank you all who spoke tonight to share your personal stories with us.

Mr. Vorst thanked everyone in the community for their input on this. We have received a lot of emails and lots of speakers. We appreciate your input. It's always great when we have parents on both sides coming out and sharing their opinion. We are really happy to see that. The superintendent and board have had a lot of great discussions about this in a short period of time. We haven't agreed on everything, but it has been very cordial and respectful. I appreciate the collegiality that we have developed. I'm looking forward to going forward. I encourage those who want to wear a mask to continue to do so. I think that is completely your prerogative. I will support you and will not shame anybody. I want people to make the decision they think is best for them and their kids. The pandemic has been a strain on all of us, especially our kids. I am very excited we are now going to make parents the ones in charge of this. Parents are the ultimate decision-makers with regard to how their kids are treated and raised. I'm glad we are putting that control back into the hand of parents. Thank you.

Mr. Perry thanked Beth, Zach, and Mr. Stewart for their comments. I know this is an emotional time for everyone. People have been very passionate on both sides of this issue. I'd like to reiterate that we have some KN95 masks that parents can request from the central office. Those masks typically protect the wearer a little bit more. So, if you have a concern, you are welcome to come and ask for

them. I know some have made this issue into a political issue, but it is not. This is not a political decision. The decision was made by following what we have been following this entire time. As the superintendent stated, the numbers are now about the same numbers we saw back in November. We have been consistent, and this is not a knee-jerk reaction. We take it seriously when dealing with the health and welfare of students. So, in this situation, we are moving cautiously, and I agree that this is the right decision at this time. I fully support the superintendent's decision, and we will do everything we can to make it work going forward. Thank you for using the authority the board gave via resolution to make this decision. I supported you when you mandated universal masking, and I support you now with removing the mandate. Thank you to everyone who spoke tonight.

Mrs. Crowley stated that when she read Mr. Stewart's email previous to this, I was apprehensive, but after speaking with you and reviewing the numbers, I support this decision. As Brian said, I supported you when you mandated universal masking and now support you to remove the mandate. But, again, I will watch the numbers and hope for the best for our students.

Mrs. Long added that since she's been on the board through the entire pandemic, she thanked the community for being patient. This has been a journey for all of us, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our superintendent and the entire leadership team for getting us to this place today. I appreciate your efforts to make sure our students are ready for tomorrow.

Public Participation continues:

Dawn Larsen

Good evening and thank you for allowing me to speak. First, the mask issue was very heated, and I want to thank all of you. I work for a nonprofit, and I know these board meetings are not always fun, so thank you. I disagree with some of you but still appreciate your time. I'm the parent of three and two are proud Hilliard graduates, and one is in the sixth grade. So, I come from that perspective. Also, I come as a concerned member of the community. I'm here to provide my thoughts on the training Kaleidoscope provided. We all know that we have a youth mental health crisis in this country, state, and district.

According to the CDC, suicide was the tenth leading cause of death in 2019 in the United States, claiming the lives of over 47,000 people. Suicide was the second leading cause of death amongst individuals between the ages of ten and thirty-four. We all hear about homicides on the news, but the reality is suicide took 2.6 times more lives than homicides. Per the Ohio Department of Health, suicide is the leading cause of death among Ohioans ages ten to fourteen. In Ohio, five people die by suicide every day, and one Ohio youth dies by suicide every thirty-three hours. The CDC's 2018 youth behavior survey found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students are roughly four times more likely to consider suicide, plan to attempt suicide, and attempt suicide than their straight peers. Concerning purely documented suicide attempts, those students are more than twice as likely to have actually attempted suicide than their heterosexual peers. But, this isn't just about statistics for our state and country. It's about our district and the children who are no longer with us due to suicide. It's about the kids who were or are currently hospitalized due to an attempt. You know these kids. They play sports with your kids and sit next to them in class. They are our community's kids.

Kaleidoscope educates teachers on how better to support LGBTQ youth. Many districts that Hilliard loves to compare themselves to have utilized Kaleidoscope for training their teachers, such as Dublin, Olentangy, Upper Arlington, and Westerville. Multiple, well-known local companies have also used Kaleidoscope for training, including Abbott Nutrition, Alliance Data, L Brands, RG Barry Brands, Scotts

Miracle Grow, and the Supreme Court of Ohio. This is only a few of them. There are a lot more companies and schools to be named. It's a well-developed and well-regarded program. So, I applaud the district for utilizing it. If this training helps even one teacher in our district make a struggling student feel heard and understood, it's worth it.

Kemmily Kwok

Good evening. I'm Kemmily, and I have two kids in the Hilliard City School District. As you all know, this is my third time being here. I am deeply disappointed about the decision to have mask choice starting so soon. I understand the data is trending down, but I feel like we really need to wait a little longer. Covid is still around. If we lift the masks and give people a choice not to wear them anymore, I'm curious to see what the data will be in the weeks to come. Let's see what happens. Since I prepared a different speech, I'm winging it right now. I'm all about masks. I'm also here on behalf of the Hilliard Parents for Masks, Science, and Diversity group. There is a prominent medical professional, Dr. Risa Hoshino. She says when people tell me that kids wearing masks are abused and impaired....I come from Japan, where I've been masking since I was little. I never felt abused. In fact, I felt honored to help others. Then I grew up to be a badass doctor. So, I'm pretty sure I'm not impaired either.

Lastly, I want to commend the district on working with the LGBTQ organization Kaleidoscope. I think it is a great resource for those students who feel marginalized and have a place to go for any support and assistance. We have had some suicides this past school year, and this is one resource to prevent such tragedies from happening. Coincidentally, today is Valentine's Day. It is a day of love. We should love one another no matter your race, age, religious beliefs, and especially your sexual orientation. Thank you.

Christina Ulrey

Hi, I'm Christina Ulrey, and I'm the mother of a gay non-binary kid who graduated from Hilliard Davidson last year. My child is amazing and brilliant, and I knew even before they told me they were gay. But, I know not all students have this support. Supportive teachers and education save lives, which is why Kaleidoscope is so important. Any advice from them is crucial in saving kids' lives. I've heard that they are pushing an agenda. Yes, the agenda is love and acceptance. We all benefit when kids are seen, heard, and validated for who they are. I've been thanked so many times for being so accepting of my kid, which seems odd to me. How could you not love your own child no matter what? It's hard enough for kids growing up. Let's not put more restrictions on teachers and administrators. I, myself, am still here because of teachers. Please do not let our students down. Thank you.

Amber Koppenhofer

Good evening, my name is Amber Koppenhofer, and my two children are a senior and a freshman at Hilliard Darby High School. I want to thank all of you for being here tonight and giving me a few minutes of your time. I heard a lot of talk about students' emotional well-being this evening, and that is why I am here to support the presence of Kaleidoscope. I was so pleased to hear about them providing some professional development for our teachers. Part of why I'm so pleased about the presence of Kaleidoscope is because both of my kids are part of the LGBTQ community. When learning about this, I did not feel embarrassment or shame and was not worried about what this meant for their religious or spiritual life. I did feel pride in their ability to be brave and fully express themselves, but I also felt fear. I've known members of the LGBTQ community all of my life, and I've watched them be rejected, abandoned, discriminated against, and abused. Of course, I became concerned for my children's mental, emotional, and physical well-being. I see how important it is for members of the gay population to feel safe in their surroundings as a parent of children who are members of the LGBTQ community and as a licensed professional clinical counselor who values this community and their needs. Having Kaleidoscope involved

in educating our teachers on how to support LGBTQ students is something that makes me feel less fear for my children's well-being and safety. However, I have learned there are individuals that share a very different fear – that Kaleidoscope is damaging to their family values and beliefs. I recently read an opinion piece written by a central Ohio organization called Mission America. This organization claims to be of the Christian faith. In this opinion piece, they made statements that organizations like Kaleidoscope are a direct threat to the comfort and safety of their children.

Yet, the position of Mission America is to remove Kaleidoscope's involvement in the Hilliard City Schools, and this poses a real threat to the well-being of my children and their peers. If we refuse to acknowledge the LGBTQ community's need for support, we are discriminating against who is deserving of support and removing equal rights from the student population. My wish is not to remove anyone's right to freely express themselves and their beliefs, assuming their agenda is not to oppress the needs of other populations for their own comfort. I encouraged my youngest to keep an open mind when speaking to a teacher who had a Christian message on her classroom door. Regardless of the intention, this message felt threatening to my child. However, I decided to let the teacher's actions speak first, and she proved to be a kind, caring, and accepting individual. I support her right to display her faith as long as it is not used to discriminate against others.

Denice Kocher

I'm here today as a parent of a seventh-grader at Heritage Middle School. I have also been an educator for twenty-two years in an adjoining district. There have been some parents and possibly staff who have expressed concern and unfounded alarm about Kaleidoscope Youth Center providing training focused on LGBTQ+ issues to Hilliard City School District staff. Particularly the issue of gender diversity. As the parent of a seventh-grader at Heritage Middle School, I am very grateful for the district seeking to help better understand and support transgender students. My child is a straight "A" student and has been recognized as a student of the month for, in the words of his teacher, the respect and support of everyone at Heritage. My child also happens to be transgender. Even though he strives to work hard to be supportive and kind to others, my child doesn't like going to school because he and his LGBTQ+ friends face daily bullying and harassment at the hands of other students in the halls between classes and on the school bus.

My child is frequently shoved and screamed at while walking to class and on the bus. Other students have referred to my child using nonhuman terms such as "it" in front of a staff member. Nothing has been done. My child doesn't feel that going to any staff member about these issues will come to any avail. So, he quietly endures it and lets it roll off his back. At least my son has a supportive family and friends. I cannot imagine how a student without support outside of school can feel. It is no wonder that LGBTQ+ students attempt suicide at a rate four times that of their straight peers. All students deserve to feel safe and accepted at school. It is my hope that providing Hilliard City School staff with training on how to support LGBTQ+ students will help transform the culture, so this becomes a reality. Studies have shown that having just one supportive adult reduces the risk of suicide in LGBTQ+ youth substantially. Hopefully, more teachers can become that adult for students who experience so much rejection and harassment simply for existing. Thank you.

Aiden Kocher

My name is Aiden Kocher. I'd like to discuss the topic of...between staff and students and some parents in regards to how to help LGBTQ+ students. Certain parents are concerned about the corruption of students and staff. I'd like to say just because.....Kaleidoscope Youth, does not mean they are trying to corrupt students and staff. They are trying to explain that there are students in this district that need respect. I

feel very deeply that staff and students should be taught to respect LGBTQ+ students at their school. I haven't gone a day without being disrespected or seeing other LGBTQ+ students being disrespected or harassed. Studies show that unsupported LGBTQ+ youth are four times more likely to commit or attempt suicide. Having at least one supportive adult in their life reduces this risk by 40%. LGBTQ+ students are three times more likely to feel unsafe at school, and 90% of LGBTQ+ have been harassed or assaulted in the last year. There is also a large issue of students and staff disrespecting other marginalized groups such as people of color, disabled students, and students of different religions. Thank you.

Ava Stormont

Hi, my name is Ava Stormont, and I'm a freshman at Hilliard Davidson. I as well as many other students of color experience many microaggressions at school on a daily basis. In the past two weeks, it has gotten worse, and many students and I have hit their breaking point. At the beginning of the month, a couple of BSA (Black Students Association) students and I hung up streamers in the hallway for Black History Month. Many kids tore down the streamers. During the football season, streamers hung for weeks untouched. If we had touched them, we would have been yelled at. There were teachers in the hallway when our streamers were taken down, and they said nothing.

I grew up on the west side and went to school in Southwestern until sixth grade. Since coming to Hilliard, I have experienced much more racism than I could have ever imagined, and there are less and less kids and teachers who look like me. Some experiences I have had since coming to the district are being called the "N" word because I accidentally stepped on someone's foot in a crowded hallway. When I said, don't hit me up going dark as a joke, like talking about social media, someone responded with, maybe you should try going light referencing my skin color. Sitting here tonight listening to multiple parents complain about mask protocol and something as simple as pronouns, I realize that on top of the school overlooking microaggressions and racism, it is also the parents' fault. I am a firm believer that racism is taught, and when parents are speaking like this at a board meeting, I can only imagine what they are teaching their children. I'm tired of going to school while dealing with my mental health issues and the multiple microaggressions I receive at school each day. I'm tired of going to school because I can't mentally deal with racism every day. I'm tired of our voices being spoken over and being told that we are just being dramatic about the racism we face on a daily basis. Thank you for listening to me, and I hope you take the time to consider what I have said and realize steps must be taken so that we as a community and district can be better. We can do better and must do better.

LaToya Spetnagel

Good evening, my name is LaToya Spetnagel, mother of a 2019 graduate of Davidson, a current freshman at Davidson, a seventh-grader at Weaver, and a four-year-old who enter kindergarten next year. I have been attending these meetings for several months, sitting back listening to people argue over books and masks. I've listened to parents complain about not having any control over their kids' education. All I want is for my children to be able to go through one week of school where they or their friends are not being bullied because of their race and ethnicity. I sat back knowing that today would come – the day I can no longer listen to you all whine about your virtual problems while the children of color in our district are feeling left out, unheard, and disrespected. Children may already be going through an identity crisis because there are not a lot of peers that look like them and even less staff. Last week the BSA at Davidson decorated the halls for Black History Month. Those decorations were torn down. When asked why they did it, some students said it would be fun. These are the same halls where banners and posters hang for weeks to celebrate a winning football game or an upcoming dance, but these banners were torn down. I come before you today because children of color and their parents are tired.

We're tired of feeling as though the administration is not listening to us. If you don't believe me, there is an Instagram post about this incident at Davidson last week. A post that had a lot of shares and over a thousand comments. Comments where students still disrespected students of color and defended their bad behavior as a difference of opinion and just being streamers. I don't care about those comments. What I read in those comments were students saying our administrators and teachers don't care about us. Our administrators and teachers will always just push these instances under the rug and expect us not to say anything. Not only are current students commenting, but past students are also commenting, stating they are not surprised; these things have been going on for years. There were some differences of opinion. There was also a student who dressed up as an influential person to them. This young man chose a person that these children found offensive. When he was informed of this, he decided to further bully and make these children feel bad by showing up at a closed meeting of the BSA. When he was asked to leave and told he could come back to the open meeting the following week, he wanted a letter stating this. Really, a letter?

I belong to a twelve-step program that has open and closed meetings. The football team has closed meetings, etc. So, because the BSA asked a white boy to leave their closed meeting, they needed to provide him with a letter stating so? In my opinion, this young man is a bully who behaved as one when he didn't get his way. We have to do better, Hilliard. We have to let these children know we have their backs. There have to be visible consequences for the entitled bullies who think it's okay to show up to a closed group meeting and demand a letter stating why they were asked to leave.

Amina Mohamed

Hello everyone, my name is Amina Mohamed, and I'm a junior at Hilliard Davidson High School. I am also president of the BSA. As Black History Month has progressed, we noticed the efforts for appreciating the differences within our school. Although there has been more inclusion, the same effort has not been reciprocated by the board or individuals in our community who have the power to improve equity in our school district. Recent events have shown that these new interventions are ineffective. In just one week, the microaggressions embedded in our school system and students.... After expressing my frustration through an Instagram post, the amount of opposition was extremely evident.

The amount of vile comments on my post indicates the racism and discrimination being felt by everyone in this room. Statements regarding the post were not only racist but discriminatory and homophobic as well. The negative reaction from this post was an attack on all minorities in Hilliard City Schools and those who support them. I remember my own experiences with racism and feel so disappointed that the same conversation is happening in our district and districts all over the country. In the end, children are a product of their environment. We need to take a step in the right direction and work together to make Hilliard a better community for all. Every parent who has a kid going to school is either supporting the problem or being a bashing force against it. Every board member who disregards this rising negativity is a part of the problem. That's just a reality. This is our time as a student body to assure you we will not back down. We are sick of staying silent and want effective changes to be made to disciplinary actions and inclusion for minorities in our curriculum. We want the board to work on changes that help students and teachers. We don't want sympathy. This is your opportunity to understand a side that has been silent for so long. This is the time to bring power to our own education. This is a time for change. Thank you for your time.

Mrs. Long thanked each brave student for speaking and sharing your experiences with us. Your advocacy for yourself, your classmates, and your school is inspiring and impressive. I'm sorry to hear about your experiences. You may know the board has committed to supporting our students and ensuring that

Hilliard City Schools provides an inclusive environment for all staff and students. What you have shared tonight indicates that the work is important and needs to be ongoing. We are clearly not done yet. Thank you for reminding us.

Mr. Stewart also thanked the students for joining us tonight. If you need another indication of their passion for equity, I'm sure they didn't expect to wait nearly two hours for the opportunity to speak, but they stayed and participated. I will be going to Davidson this week to meet with the BSA, listen, and begin the healing and problem-solving process. I commend you for starting the organization – you recognized a need and filled it.

Mr. Perry echoed the words of Mrs. Long and Mr. Stewart. Thank you for speaking today. We really appreciate it. I'm proud of our board for starting the process for action. We passed a resolution supporting our diversity. We established the first-ever diversity and equity committee. We established the first position of a diversity and equity coordinator devoted to ensuring these issues are solved. Thank you for coming to us with your problems. I also support the work of Kaleidoscope. Not only will I stand with our LGBTQ students, but I will also stand in front of our LGBTQ students to shield them from the ridiculous comments from hate groups. You cannot talk about mental health without addressing diverse mental health.

E CONSENT AGENDA

- E1 Approved the following Certified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E2 Approved the following Classified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.

The Board of Education approved item E1 through E2, including certified and classified personnel matters. You can find the complete list of personnel matters as an attachment to the Minutes.

F ACTION AGENDA

- F1 The Board of Education adopted the following policy:
 - a. IKF – Graduation Requirements

Mr. Perry stated that the OSBA PDQ recommended the changes required by the Ohio Revised Code.

- F2 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education of the Hilliard City School District, Franklin County, Ohio, that to provide for current expenses and other expenditures of said Board of Education, during the fiscal year, ending June 30, 2022, the following sums be amended and the same are hereby set aside and appropriated for the several purposes for which expenditures are to be made and during said fiscal year as follows:

019 – OTHER GRANT	\$176,000
590 – TITLE II-A	\$569,100

Mr. Wilson explained that we received an additional \$67,000 for the 019 fund – \$62,000 from an Amazon grant to work on our discovery zones and a \$5,000 grant for Scioto Darby Elementary from the Columbus

Foundation. In addition, we have received an additional \$35,000 for fund 590, the diversifying educators grant.

F3 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

AMENDED
 RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE AMOUNTS AND RATES AS DETERMINED BY THE BUDGET COMMISSION AND
 AUTHORIZING THE NECESSARY TAX LEVIES AND CERTIFYING THEM TO THE COUNTY AUDITOR
 (CITY, VILLAGE OF LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION) OHIO REVISED CODE, SECTIONS 5705.34, 5705.35

WHEREAS, This Board of Education in accordance with the provisions of law has previously adopted a Tax Budget for the next succeeding fiscal year commencing July 1, 2021; and

WHEREAS, The Budget Commission of Franklin County, Ohio, has certified its action thereon to this Board together with an estimate by the County Auditor of the rate of each tax necessary to be levied by this Board, and what part thereof is without, and what part within, the ten mill tax limitation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the Board of Education of the Hilliard City School District, Franklin County, Ohio, that the amounts and rates, as determined by the Budget Commission in its certification, be and the same are hereby accepted: and be it further

RESOLVED, That there be and is hereby levied on the tax duplicate of said School District the rate of each tax necessary to be levied within and without the ten mill limitation for tax year 2021 (collection year 2022) as follows:

SCHEDULE A
 SUMMARY OF AMOUNTS REQUIRED FROM GENERAL PROPERTY TAX APPROVED BY THE BUDGET
 COMMISSION, AND COUNTY AUDITOR’S ESTIMATED TAX RATES

Fund	Amount to be Derived from Levies Outside 10 Mill Limitation	Amount Approved by Budget Commission Inside 10 Mill Limitation	County Auditor’s Estimate of Full Tax Rate to be Levied	
			Inside 10 Mill Limit	Outside 10 Mill Limit
General Fund	\$139,145,802.48	\$15,475,754.32	4.45	80.50
Bond Retirement	\$16,036,053.62			4.60
Permanent Improvement Classroom Facilities	\$5,315,087.32			2.00
TOTAL	\$160,496,943.42	\$15,475,754.32	4.45	87.10

and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Treasurer of this Board be and is hereby directed to certify a copy of this Resolution to the County Auditor of said County.

Mr. Wilson explained the county budget commission reviews our alternative tax budget document and approves the rates of our tax levies annually. Then, we are required to approve what they have approved.

G REPORTS / INFORMATION / EXHIBIT ITEM

G1 Committee Reports

Mr. Perry announced that registration is open for OSBA’s Central Region Spring Conference scheduled for March 9. The registration deadline is March 1. In addition, if you want to submit any local business to put on the OSBA Local Business Honor Roll, the submission deadline is March 11.

Mrs. Murdoch reported that the ISPTO met on January 18. There was a presentation on professional development with a robust discussion about dyslexia support and the district’s new 95 Phonics Core program. There was also a discussion about the difficulty in getting PTO representation at the sixth-grade level. It’s tough to recruit for the one-year commitment. So, if there are any fifth-grade parents interested in being involved in your child’s school next year, I’m sure they would love to hear from you.

Mrs. Crowley reported that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee met recently. We reviewed where we’ve been and set goals for where we plan to go. Hilary did a great job leading the group. Listening to some of the public participation earlier tonight, it’s clear we have a lot of work to do. I invite you to attend our committee meetings. We meet on Tuesdays from 4:00-5:30 p.m. We are grateful and proud of you for speaking.

Mrs. Crowley also announced the HEF Denim and Diamonds Fundraising event scheduled for March 4. We would love to have as many people there as possible.

Mr. Vorst reported they had a phone meeting with Meritain, our employee health insurance administrator. There was a discussion about program usage, and it was very informative. It seems that our insurance program is very well received by our staff.

Mr. Vorst also attended a Master Facilities Planning steering committee via Zoom. There were about forty people who attended. We reviewed the plans and timeline for the project. I believe the next Facilities Committee meeting is scheduled for April.

Mrs. Long reported that we met with the elected officials of Hilliard City Council and local townships last week. It was our kickoff meeting for the year. They were receptive to our idea of rotating which members attend these meetings. So, I will be asking you to check your calendar for which meeting(s) you can attend.

G2 Enrollment

No report tonight.

H EXECUTIVE SESSION / ADJOURNMENT

H1 The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.