



Daytona Regional CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Florida School Mask Mandate Ban Ruled Unlawful

On August 24th, 2021, after a four-day trial, Leon County Circuit Judge John C. Cooper knocked down the state's order banning local school boards from implementing mask mandates. Judge Cooper stated that school districts have the right to set policies as long as they have compelling state interests and have a narrow plan of action. The judge's order was not a ruling against Gov. Ron DeSantis but to bar state agencies from enforcing blanket orders against local mask mandates. Judge Cooper stated, "the evidence demonstrates that face mask policies that follow CDC guidance are at this point in time reasonable and consistent with the best scientific and medical opinion and guidance in the country."

Taryn Fenske, Gov. DeSantis' communications director, said, "It's not surprising that Judge Cooper would rule against parent's rights and their ability to make the best educational and medical decisions for their family,----

--- , but instead rule in favor of elected politicians." The governor's team argued that parents should have the final say, and there is no clear evidence masks prevent the spread of COVID.

The Volusia County school board is following suit with many other school districts across the state by instating a mask mandate for students. On August 31st, the Volusia County School voted in a 3-2 narrow margin to implement a mandate despite the protest outside the room. The policy will go into effect on September 7th, and staff will start enforcing the new policy on September 13th through October 12th. Parents will be able to obtain medical exemptions. The mask mandate will apply to K-12 students and district staff in indoor settings. Volusia County schools have reported 763 cases of COVID compared to 39 during the same timeframe last year.

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Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran has taken a strong stance on school boards that have passed mask mandates, stopping the pay of both Alachua and Broward school board members. Corcoran said in a statement, “We’re going to fight to protect parent’s rights to make health care decisions for their children, “They know what is best for their children.”

Gov. Ron DeSantis has appealed Judge Cooper’s ruling.