



Nathan Mains
Chief Executive Officer
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
400 Bent Creek Blvd.
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

February 17, 2022

Keara Klinepeter
Acting Secretary of Health
Pennsylvania Department of Health
Health and Welfare Building
8th Floor West
625 Forster Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Madam Secretary,

Your recent comments stating that schools not participating in the state's Covid-19 school testing program are "not doing their job to protect kids and teachers" are upsetting and completely inaccurate. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, school districts have been confronted with a set of unparalleled challenges as they implemented changes in operations, delivery of instruction and student services, and planning and putting health and safety protocols into practice. The deployment of these protocols has not ended – including school building and vehicle cleaning; transportation adjustments; purchasing and providing personal protective equipment; maintaining reports of active COVID-19 cases and keeping families informed; contact tracing; continuing in-person, virtual and hybrid learning options; and more.

The COVID-19 pandemic turned the already complex job of providing public education for students into an even more difficult one requiring complicated and often last-minute response to various guidance and best practices. According to our State of Education survey taken during the height of the pandemic, the biggest challenge cited by school leaders was the inadequate and constantly changing guidance from government agencies. In our most recent State of Education survey, 99% of school leaders agreed that their staff were "burned out" as a result of dealing with the pandemic. Over the past two years, public schools have risen to the challenge to provide education to the commonwealth's students in a safe and healthy manner even under extreme circumstances.

To suggest that schools are not doing their job is disparaging to those who work tirelessly to ensure that their buildings and classrooms are, indeed, safe and healthy environments for students, teachers, and staff. PSBA and the dedicated members we represent respectfully submit that the situation is far more complicated and ask for a retraction of your recent remarks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Mains", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Nathan Mains
Chief Executive Officer
Pennsylvania School Boards Association