**Policy Brief: School Board Meeting Review**

Natalie Spears

Department of Social Work, Longwood University

SOWK 315: Social Work in the Educational Setting

Dr. Brown Meredith

February 23, 2022

This paper dives into the topic of the mask mandate and how it has an impact on the children within the school systems as well as the faculty and staff. The purpose of this paper is to give a policy brief on the lifting of the mask mandate and its negative impacts and what the potential problems that come from it, along with how it could possibly be fixed. Policy recommendations will be given and discussed as to how it could be beneficial.

Along with the brief summary of the policy itself, there will be discussions on the specific research findings and how it is directly correlated to the contexts and the issues of the policy. The implications will be stated and what the research finding means as for development and what outcomes can come from the recommended actions and the possible outcomes if there is no action.

**Context and Relevance of the Problem**

The mask mandate was lifted by Governor Youngkin, which causes a lot of potential issues and risks. This problem is relevant because the world is currently going through a pandemic, COVID-19. While there are vaccines to protect people from the virus, the virus continues to get worse and spread more while many refuse to get vaccinated which gives a reason as to why masks are so essential and necessary. Masks are used for everyone’s safety and when unvaccinated people refuse to wear them, it puts many at risk. The issue with Governor Youngkin lifting this mask mandate is the fact that it allows the virus the potentiality to spread and put more people at risk.

**Critique of Policy**

This policy raises the potential risks to almost everyone, but it also could more so negatively impact those apart of vulnerable populations. For example, the mask mandate lift could threaten those who are immunocompromised. Those who are immunocompromised could be more affected by the virus’s symptoms more than those who are not. The mask mandate lift can also create a lot of fear and unnecessary tension for those that are in the educational settings.

**Policy Recommendations**

 The vaccine was created to help prevent the spread of COVID, which has been a big step towards what could be normality. That being said, the pandemic is yet to be over and lifting the mask mandate could only be taking steps backwards, raising the risks of spreading the COVID virus. There could be two options to be a potential fix for this policy. The first option is that everyone should just wear a mask; however, many people feel like that is infringing on their freedom and that could cause a lot of tension. The second option would be that only those who are unvaccinated wear masks. Again, a lot of people would feel like that is going against their freedom and some people may be angry with that and feel as if they are being controlled. If option two was chosen, then the best way to prove if they are vaccinated would be to have their vaccine card and put it on file for the school like they do with a lot of other vaccinations already. This would be a good option to use until COVID starts to ease back up and is less of a threat.

**Conclusion**

 The lift of the mask mandate is a potential threat for many people in the educational setting, such as students, faculty, staff, and even school social workers. While the vaccine was made to protect everyone from the virus, the virus still stays a threat because there is still a potential risk of someone getting the virus, even if they were vaccinated. Not only that, but those also who cannot get the vaccine because they are immunocompromised are at high risk and could suffer more than others if they got the virus. The best way to solve this issue is to fix the policy to where either everyone wears masks or if those who are unvaccinated at least wear masks.

**References**

Youngkin, G. (2022, January 15). *Number Two (2022) order of public ... - governor.virginia.gov*. REAFFIRMING THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS IN THE UPBRINGING, EDUCATION, AND CARE OF THEIR CHILDREN. Retrieved February 2, 2022, from https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/74---eo/74---eo/EO-2---School-Mask-Mandate-Executive-Order-Exception.pdf