

Dear Superintendent Ragsdale and Members of the Cobb County School Board:

We the undersigned are writing to you as physicians and advanced practice providers who are also parents, and/or taxpayers, and/or members of the Cobb County community or care for patients in Cobb County. **We are deeply concerned that our district has chosen to disregard best practices for mitigation for the 2021-22 school year despite the current public health guidelines and increasing number of cases, including outbreaks at multiple schools throughout the county.**

Despite assurances to the contrary prior to this school year, the district is not adhering to CDC guidelines. **CCSD's recently released Public Health Protocols for 2021-2022 do not comply with the most recent guidance from the CDC, AAP and CDPH for safe school reopening and COVID-19 risk mitigation.** It was noted in that communication that these current protocols are "based on the same priorities which successfully navigated us throughout last year". **We succeeded in keeping schools open and spread down through the use of mitigation measures including masks, physical distancing where possible, a strict quarantine and isolation policy, and a robust virtual option which served the purpose of reducing the number of individuals in the school building, allowing for distancing. Now the district has decided to eliminate all of these measures, putting our students and your staff at risk.**

The current recommendation from the Cobb & Douglas Public Health officials is for **all schools and school districts to follow CDC guidelines. CDC guidelines include the use of masks while indoors for all individuals above the age of 2:**

"Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status."

In addition, the CDC recommends a multilayered approach to prevention, including distancing and screening testing.

"When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, **it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as screening testing.** Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe."

Regarding staff and students who are exposed, there is no carve-out for those whose exposures occur in the school building. While we all acknowledge the importance of in-person schooling, this must be balanced with the safety of the students, staff and community. Again from the CDC: **“Students, staff, and educators who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 should receive diagnostic testing and should begin quarantine.** Exceptions include someone who has been fully vaccinated and shows no symptoms of COVID-19 does not need to quarantine but should be tested 3-5 days following a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result and those who have recovered from COVID-19 within the past 3 months.”

We agree with the [open letter](#) sent to all Georgia school superintendents, on 7/20/21 in which the GA AAP (representing 1,800 pediatricians across our state) has urged school districts to follow the **AAP Guidance for schools: “All students older than 2 years and all school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use).”** In addition, **“Include multiple layers of other protection such as social distancing and good ventilation. The recommendations are that schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students in classrooms wherever possible, combined with indoor mask wearing, to reduce transmission risk.”**

As of August 13, 2021, there is high level of community spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. In Cobb, currently there are 493/100k cases, a rate that Dr. Memark calls “alarming”. In addition, our test positivity rate is 12.8%, which indicates that insufficient testing is occurring to detect all of the cases. **The leading health experts in the country recommend that schools be closed at a rate of 100/100k, which is 20% of the level of spread we are seeing right now.**

As the [Delta variant](#) spreads and cases mount, it is critical to utilize a layered approach to COVID-19 prevention. Thousands of Cobb students and staff have been exposed at school. Slowing the spread in schools is essential to slowing community spread. **Currently our hospitals, ICUs, and clinics are struggling to provide care for the whole community, and with the continued rise in cases our hospitals could become overburdened.** When that happens, it puts everyone who may need medical care (regardless of condition) at risk.

Until K-12 schools meet a high enough threshold of vaccination for both students and staff, we must continue the layered approach that has been shown to keep school transmission rates low, including the use of face coverings, physical distancing, excellent ventilation, adherence to a strict quarantine policy,

and a robust virtual option. Otherwise, more school outbreaks of COVID-19 are inevitable, leading to illness and subsequent disruptions to learning.

As it stands now, we see no evidence that you have followed public health guidelines and used proper mitigation strategies. **Our students, staff and community deserve to be protected while they learn, yet your decisions have placed the majority of them at risk.** You are directly accountable and in a position of power to provide our children with a safe learning environment. We expect you to modify your 2021-2022 Public Health Protocols to adequately address the current severity of the pandemic and help to ensure a safe and healthy community.

Signatures begin on the next page.

Name	Specialty
Karen Thrower, MD	Pediatrics
Laura Verigan, MD	Pediatrics
Sadia Ali	Foot and Ankle Surgery
Timothy Lin	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Tejas Mehta	Pediatric Gastroenterology
Saira Adeel, MD, FACE	Endocrinology
Maren Bear MD MPH	Pediatrics
Mona Megahed	Pediatrics
Sujatha Hariharan	Hematology/Oncology
Dimple Shah	internal medicine
Joanna Kerr, CPNP	Pediatrics
Sadaria Kishor	Internal Medicine
Laura Badwan, MD	Pediatrics
Ahmad Khaldi, MD	Neurosurgery
Ashleigh Clark, FNP-C	OB-GYN
Jonathan Chen	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Gautham Viswanathan, MD	Nephrology
Malar Ramasamy, MD	Nephrology
Vineet Reddy, MD	Pulmonary/Critical Care

Tammy Williams, MD	Pediatrics
Kumuda Ranjan, MD	Family Medicine
LaToya Oglesby MD	Pediatric Hospitalist
Usha Anand, MD	Hospitalist
Patrick Parkman AGACNP-BC	Critical Care
Hiren V Patel, MD	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Sunitha Girish MD	Endocrinology
Nana Arthur, MD	Hospitalist
Meena Visvanathan MD	Internal Medicine
Marcus Goodman, DO	Dermatology
Lindsay Green, MD	Pediatrics
Avanthi Doppalapudi, MD	Infectious Disease
Alsadek Sultan, MD	Hospitalist
Monika Karakattu	Family Medicine
Annie Tang, MD	Emergency Medicine
Pooja Bardhan MD MPH	Hematology-Oncology
Shaji J Puthuvel MD	Psychiatry
Akhil Vallabhaneni, MD	Pulmonary and Critical Care
Shelly Norris	Anesthesiology
Amyn Hirani MD	Pulmonary and Critical Care
Neelima Kothari MD	Pulmonary and Critical Care

Andrew Helms	Thoracic surgery
Ragheed Alturkmani	Pulmonary Critical care
Zenobia JonesFoster	Hospitalist
Kathleen Empen MD	Pediatrics
Jocelyn Joseph MD	Family medicine
Frank Italiano MD	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Priya Behari MD	Infectious Disease
Nirupama Natarajan MD	Child and Adult Psychiatrist
Huda Sayed, MD	Palliative Care
Joanna Dolgoff MD	Pediatrics
Prashant Patil, MD	Internal Medicine
Arpita Srivastava	Hospitalist
Satyen Mehta MD	Hematology/Oncology
Nikita Rangwalla MD	Pediatric Emergency Med
Saadia Ilyas MD	Family Medicine
Abdul Sheikh	Cardiology
Anjali Khakharia	Geriatrics
Sheetal Desai, DO	Hospitalist
Faresa Weragoda	Cardiologist
Raj Valvani, DO	Physiatrist
Sarvenaz Danesh, MD	intensivist

Seema Lee, MD	Hospitalist
Nasira Hussain, MD	Hospitalist
Katherine Gartin, MD	Pediatric Emergency
Amaka Awoniyi	Hospitalist
M. Ali Al-Azem, MD	Pulmonary Critical care
Raja Sappati MD	Gastroenterology & Hepatology
Smitha Battula MD	Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Frini Shah, MD	Pediatrics
Meaghan McKenna	pediatrics
Ritesh Shah, MD	Gastroenterology
Porsche Patil, NP	
Martha Aguilera MD FACS	Hospitalist
Shelley Anderson, PA	Pulmonary Critical Care
Crain Garrot	Hematology/oncology
Varsha Patel, MD	Palliative Medicine
Amanda McGahee, MD, FAAP	Pediatrics
Martha Aguilera MD FACS	General Surgery
Jyoti Sharma	Nephrology
Tracy Barr, MD	Pediatrics
Ebonique B. Moment MD	Anesthesiologist
Remmya Nair, MD	Family medicine

Madhuri Meka MD	Gastroenterology
William T Dowdell MD	Pulmonary Critical Care
Aamer Rahman	Pulmonary/critical care
Anitha Nagappan MD	Internal Medicine
Surya Palakuru	Pulmonary Critical Care
Sudhir Belagaje MD	Orthopedic Surgery
Padma Iyengar MD	Pediatrics
Julie Patel, MD	Family Medicine
Kailash Kulkarni,MD	Internal Medicine
Vaishanavi Laiwala,MD	Internal Medicine
Sridevi Agasthi	Internal medicine
Erik Trosclair, MD	Emergency Medicine
Sadeka Shahani	Endocrinologist
Medel Reyes MD	Pulmonary Critical Care MED
Hina Hussain MD	Family Medicine
Adrienne Jordan, DO	Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Abdalsamih Taeb MD	Pulmonary and critical care
Jennifer Headrick, MD	Internal Medicine
Anamika Khatri-Dua	Pediatrics
Vineet Dua	Cardiology
Edward Stettner	Emergency Medicine

Anupama Ravikanth	Internal Medicine
Jordana Heaven, MD	Pediatrics
Joanna Miragaya MD	Endocrinology
Alexis Ahonen, WHNP	OBGYN and Infectious Disease Research
Mofolasade Adeyi, MD MPH	Family Medicine
Adriana Rzeznik MD	Pediatrics
Marvin Eric Nix, MD	Emergency Medicine
Fonda D. Martin, MD	Obstetrics and Gynecology
Daquesha Chever	Family Med/ urgent cares
Margaux Charbonnet, MD	Pediatrics
Shailesh Malla MD FACC	Cardiologist
Namita Rajouria Malla MD FAPA	Child Psychiatry
Sharon Sonenshine PNP	Pediatrics
Amit Thakral	Pediatric rheumatology
Shany Cohen-Sadan MD	Family medicine
Robert Stoltz, MD, PhD	Ophthalmology
Shivam Patel, MD	Endocrinology
Dipika Sharma, MD	Pediatrics
Nirav Patel, MD	Pediatric Gastroenterology
Ashleigh El Sakr, MD	Pediatrics
Mohammad Kamran	Rheumatology

Sydney Wang, PA-C	Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Menelaos Demestihias, MD	Emergency Medicine
Ami Dalsania, DO	Pediatrics
Ofer Sadan, MD	Intensivist
Aadil Vora DO	Emergency Medicine
Jordan Howard, MD	Psychiatry
Shital Papat, MD	Internal Medicine
Adetolu Odufuye, MD	Emergency Medicine
Tam Le, MD	Pediatrics
Jamie Weisman, M.D.	Dermatology
Patricia Wolfe, DO	Pediatrics
Melani Cornelius-Sanders MD	OB/GYN
Erica Judge Edwards, MD	Family Medicine
Janelle Williams Holder, MD	Palliative and Hospice
Andre Holder	Critical Care Medicine
Aerica Summers, MD, MPH, FAAFP	Family Medicine
Mohan Punja, MD	Emergency Medicine
Abimbola Faloye, MD	ANESTHESIOLOGY
Shalabh "Mickey" Bansal, MD	Pediatrics
Claire K. Bush, MD	Pediatrics
Tina Vothing, MD	Pediatrics

Sharvari Rangnekar MD	Endocrinology
Harini Chittineni	nephrology
Stanton Stebbins	Pediatrics
Hang Shi MD	Neurology
Nicholas Chiera, DO	OB/GYN
Francheska Alcide, MD	Family
Amber Driskell, MD	Internal Medicine
Caroline Kemp,PA-C	Pulmonary Medicine
Nidhi G. Huff, MD	Pulmonary/ Critical Care
Thomas Sheftel, MD	Infectious Disease
Brandy Blackwell-Ford,MD	pediatrics
Josh Hargraves	Emergency Medicine
Prashant Mishra, MD	Internal Medicine
Gagandeep Joshi, MD	Cardiology
Sivan Hines, MD	Pediatrics
Marisa Gadea, MD	Pediatrics
Jasmine Kearse, MD	Psychiatry
Melanie Coon, CPNP	Pediatrics
Evelyn A Reynolds, MD	Gynecologic Oncology
Cynthia Colquhoun, MD	Pediatrics
Rohit Panchal	Pulmonary /critical care

Annisha Ellis, MD	Pediatrics
Vaishali Shah	Internal medicine
Sahir Shroff	Surgical oncology
Alexandra Vatzakas, MSN, AGACNP-BC	Pulmonary/ Critical Care
Belinda Graham, MD	Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
Ashima Bharara, MD	Emergency Medicine
Aashish Bharara, MD	Pain management
Bryan Kumiga D.O.	Physiatrist
Wendy Book MD	Cardiology
Michael Piansky, MD	Internal Medicine
Tariq Noohani, DO	Emergency Medicine
Jody Hughes, MD, FCCP	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Sarah Bentley PA-C	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Angela R. McMichael, AGACNP	Critical Care Medicine
Shaynah Goldfine	Ankle & Foot specialist
Sohail Asfandiyar MD	Gastroenterology
Nitin Mayur, MD	Endocrinology
Melissa Kinnebrew, MD	Dermatology
Katrice Larece, DO	OB/GYN
Kylie Little, PA-C	Emergency Medicine
Saima Hussain MD	Pediatrics

Anish Desai, MD	Gastroenterology
Eleza Golden, MD	Radiology
Mary E. Coon, MD	Emergency Medicine
Asif A. Saberi, MD	Pulmonary and Critical Care
Jennifer Giuseffi MD	Cardiology
Lyudmila Tavrovsky	Internal Medicine
Kelly Weselman, MD	Rheumatology
Dilani Weerasuriya, MD	Emergency Medicine
Tracy Thomas, PA-C	Pediatric Pulmonology
Shreedhar Nagnur, MD	Internal Medicine
Madhavi Siddhanthi	rheumatology
Justin Alexander, MD	PM&R
Jay Desai, MD	Radiology
Meagan Griffith, ACNP	Cardiac Surgery
Karim Ali, MD	Emergency Medicine
Jacqueline W. Green	Neurology
Chirag Popat, MD	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Michael Lava, MD	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Melissa Boekhaus, MD	Pediatrics
Audrey Nuccio, MD	Neurology
Heather Shields, NP-C	Infectious Disease

Sajin Karakattu, MD	Pulmonary/Critical Care
Nicholas Irwin, MD	Emergency Medicine
Anand Shah, MD	Ophthalmology
Nauman Rashid, MD	Emergency Medicine
Joshua Davis, MD	Emergency Medicine
Asif Choudhary M.D.	C & A Psychiatry
Monica W Best, MD	Ob/Gyn
Reshma Shah	Endocrinology
Humza Ilyas, MD	Dermatology
Yasamin Alwan Ilyas, DO	Pediatrics
Stacey Malstrom, NP	Cardiology
Anita Shetty, MD	Dermatology
Yasmeen Fareeduddin, DO	Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Habibur Rahman, MD	Pediatrics
Monica Bratton, MD	Ophthalmology
Amirah Brown-Johnson MD	Pediatrics
Margaret Omatsone MD	Infectious diseases
Juron Foreman, MD	Emergency Medicine
Rachel Swerdlin, CPNP	Pediatrics
Christopher Chan, DO	Pulmonary Critical Care
Juan C Armstrong	Pulmonary Critical Care

Deepa Narang, MD	Pediatrics
Lubaina Rangwala, MD	Ophthalmology
Bradley Gaydos, MSN, FNP-C	Family Medicine
Nisha Ali FNP-C	Cardiology
Elizabeth Blackwood	Pulmonary and Critical Care
Michael Nitzken, MD FACEP	Emergency Medicine
Jenny E. Han, MD, MSc	Pulmonary and Critical care
Matthew Whitley, MD	Pediatric ENT
Anand Mehta, MD	Primary Care
Vijay Nath, MD	Nephrology