



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara, colleagues call for end to Cuomo's mask mandate for young children: Joined by regional and statewide parents and child care providers to voice opposition (WATCH)

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 24, 2021

| ISSUE: **COMBATING COVID-19 AND PROTECTING NEW YORKERS' HEALTH**



The parents and child care providers we heard from today -- including Adam Donegan of Corning and Amber Thompson of Big Flats -- made it clear that this mask mandate for toddlers is absurd, impractical and, worst of all, endangers the development, health, safety, security, and well-being of our children. It's another outrageous example of the damage being done by an out-of-touch governor, fixated on control, and blatantly ignoring science and medical facts. At a time when we are clearly turning the corner on this pandemic, Governor Cuomo decides to put our children right back in the middle of the fear and uncertainty that we have spent more than a year fighting to

overcome.

Elmira, N.Y., May 24—State Senator Tom O’Mara and other members of the Senate Republican Conference today joined parents and child care providers from the Southern Tier and throughout New York State to hold a virtual “Unmask Our Kids” rally in opposition to Governor Andrew Cuomo’s new mandate requiring children as young as two years old to wear a face covering at day care centers and summer camps.

The new Cuomo executive order was handed down last week and has drawn strong criticism and opposition from providers and parents locally and statewide.

Opponents note that throughout the pandemic, young children at child care facilities were not required to wear masks.

O’Mara said, “Why now Governor Cuomo? The parents and child care providers we heard from today made it clear that this mask mandate for toddlers is absurd, impractical and, worst of all, endangers the development, health, safety, security, and well-being of our children. It’s another outrageous example of the damage being done by an out-of-touch governor, fixated on control, and blatantly ignoring science and medical facts. At a time when we are clearly turning the corner on this pandemic, Governor Cuomo decides to put our children right back in the middle of the fear and uncertainty that we have spent more than a year fighting to overcome. It is an abuse of power and if Cuomo won’t rescind it on his own, the Albany Democrats in control of the Legislature need to act immediately to end it.”

O’Mara said that he and his colleagues will advance a legislation amendment later today in session calling on the Senate Democratic Majority to repeal the Cuomo mask mandate.

At O’Mara’s request, Adam Donegan, a Corning parent whose 3-year-old daughter attends the Corning Children’s Center, and Amber Thompson, owner of the Country Kids Childcare Center in Big Flats, Chemung County, participated in today’s Senate GOP rally.

Donegan called on Cuomo to immediately repeal the mask mandate.

Donegan said, “I am very angry about this as a parent. This is ridiculous. It makes not sense that our kids can go to day care unmasked through the hardest parts of this pandemic and now all of a sudden, just as summer is beginning, let’s put masks on these little kids. There are people angry across this state. This is not right. We are parents. We take care of our children. We make those decisions, not Governor Cuomo. This is not protecting them.”

Thompson echoed that call, noting that she has had no cases of COVID-19 in children at her center throughout the pandemic.

Thompson said, “For the past fourteen months, child care centers have continued to provide an essential, ground level service for all other businesses to operate. We’ve followed every mandate and we were never asked to mask these children, even when infection rates were at their highest. Why would a mandate come down now, when we are at a positivity rate across the state that is the lowest since last November, when mask mandates in the community are being lifted, and vaccines are readily available? Our job in child care is to keep children safe and to help them develop. These children spend nine to ten hours a day, five days a week, with us. We must stand up against this mandate. We must continue to do what’s best for children in day care.”

Senator O'Mara's comments at today's rally, followed immediately by remarks from Adam Donegan of Corning and Amber Thompson of Big Flats, can be viewed [HERE](#).

The rally can be viewed in its entirety at: <https://www.facebook.com/nysenaterepubs/>