

**OEA Board Resolution and Plan of Action**

**WHEREAS**, more than 600,000 unvaccinated students are attending classes today – in communities with COVID infection levels that mirror earlier January pandemic numbers; and,

**WHEREAS**, during the first few weeks of school openings, fully vaccinated educators are experiencing break-through COVID infections from working in an unsafe environment; and,

**WHEREAS**, Oklahoma’s largest hospitals are once again reaching capacity. Health care professionals report the current variant is more lethal, striking younger patients who fail faster than what was witnessed over the past year; a larger number of previously healthy kids are requiring oxygen and there is a major concern over the lack of personnel available in pediatric intensive care units; and,

**WHEREAS**, SB 658 was signed into law during the 2021 legislative session. The law prohibits Oklahoma public-school districts from enacting mask mandates and other safety precautions unless the governor signs an executive order declaring an emergency. Despite the rising threat level to Oklahoma’s school children, our governor refuses to sign such an order; and,

**WHEREAS**, this act of legislative overreach defies the Oklahoma state constitution, which gives locally elected officials the responsibility of making decisions regarding the health and welfare of their public-school students and other community members and,

**WHEREAS**, this legislative action has caused widespread confusion not just on masking but other safety protocols such as quarantining, contact tracing and testing. This confusion has made an already desperate situation worse by putting anxious parents and school personnel in a state of limbo with no clear direction as to what can be done to keep students and schools safe; and,

**WHEREAS**, Oklahomans want our students to have safe, in person learning. However, SB 658 robs local officials of the ability to make the decisions needed to keep their schools open, putting these schools at the mercy of a pandemic, which has proven it can cause overwhelming infection rates that force school closures; and,

**WHEREAS**, removing the ability of local school districts to make decisions based on local conditions to protect students, teachers, and the community will result in more children becoming ill, more children admitted to hospitals, and more children dying. \*

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that because we believe COVID should be a health issue, not a political ideology and that at times like these, local school boards and administrations need the ability to exercise their constitutional rights, we the elected Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Education Association commit to the following plan of action:

- Give voice to local school officials, administrators, teachers, education support professionals, parents and students who need their stories told through a variety of media outlets and events,
- Facilitate crucial connections between those who should be making local decisions and the health experts most qualified to support them, and
- Stand in solidarity with the Oklahoma State Medical Association in their lawsuit against the state of Oklahoma for violating our state constitution.

**IT IS SO RESOLVED** on this 28<sup>th</sup> day of August 2021.

\*This sentence is a verbatim quote taken from the Oklahoma State Medical Association’s pleading entitled: Plaintiffs’ Opening Brief in Support of Motion for Temporary Injunction.