



Dear Director Vanderhoff,

It has come to our attention that school districts and parents across Trumbull, Ashtabula, and Geauga Counties have received communications from the Ohio Department of Health referencing an order entered into the Director's Journal on February 4, 2026. The order cites authority under Ohio Revised Code Section 3701.13 to exclude completely healthy children from school, school activities, and athletics for 21–25 days following a single reported case of measles, or mumps, or (3) cases of rubella or chickenpox, regardless of whether the individual child was exposed. Under the order, that exclusion period will restart when an additional case is reported.

We also have serious concerns about the coercive nature of this policy and its impact on Ohio families. Ohio has long recognized the rights of parents to make medical decisions for their children, including through existing medical, conscientious, and religious exemptions. Policies affecting a child's ability to attend school and participate in school activities should respect those rights and remain within the authority established by the General Assembly.

For many Ohio families, an exclusion lasting several weeks, or potentially longer when additional cases are reported, creates a significant educational and practical burden. It may also prevent students from participating in athletics and other extracurricular activities that could affect a child qualifying for an academic or sports scholarship. As history has, unfortunately, dictated with tried and failed COVID-19 restrictions, excluding perfectly healthy children from their educational and extracurricular opportunities come with horrible long-term consequences and outcomes. Ohio families experienced firsthand the academic and social consequences associated with prolonged remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. We should be particularly cautious about policies that could again remove healthy children from their classrooms for extended periods without even being exposed to a disease.

We are also concerned that the policy treats vaccination status as **the only** determining factor for exclusion **rather than** an individual child's health or actual exposure. In a 2007 CDC study regarding waning immunity following two doses of the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine, the study showed that 35% of vaccinated 7-year-olds, 60% of vaccinated 15-year-olds, and OVER 60% of VACCINATED adults are able to still carry and SPREAD these diseases.

We also support President Trump's December 2025 directive, Aligning United States Core Childhood Vaccine Recommendations with Best Practices from Peer, Developed Countries, including its emphasis on parental choice and approaches that build public trust and education rather than relying on coercion.

Additionally, we are concerned about the heavy-handedness of your approach given the language of the statutes that you cite in your order. Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.671(C) states:

“Notwithstanding division (B) of this section, a school MAY deny admission to a pupil otherwise exempted from the chicken pox immunization requirement if the director of the state department of health notifies the school's principal or chief administrative officer that a chicken pox epidemic exists in the school's population.” The statutory language anticipates an epidemic before kids are sent home from school. It also does not include the allowance for exclusion for any epidemic other than Chickenpox. Sending healthy kids home for an extended period of time without any exposure whatsoever to a disease and only for one single case for Measles or Rubella, or for 3 cases of Chickenpox or Mumps seems to be far beyond the scope anticipated by the statute.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Ohio Department of Health promptly rescind references in the February 4, 2026 order to what is authorized under Section 3313.671(C) – to epidemic situations regarding Chickenpox only, and to notify all school districts of the changes. We request your prompt review and response. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,



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District 45



Representative Tim Barhorst
MAHA Caucus Co-Director
District 85



Representative DJ Swearingen
MAHA Caucus Secretary
District 89



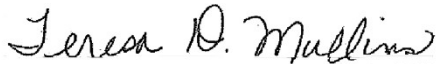
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