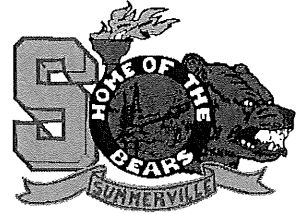


# Summerville Union High School District

17555 Tuolumne Road, Tuolumne, CA 95379 (209) 928-3498  
FAX (209) 928-1321

**Summerville High School Campus:** (209) 928-4228  
FAX: (209) 928-1422



**Superintendent** Michael Merrill

**Board of Education** \* Hans deGroot \* David Atkins \* Randy Richter \* Dennis Spisak \* Bret Taylor

January 26, 2022

Governor Gavin Newsom  
California Governor's Office  
1303 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Sent via Electronic Mail*

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am Michael Merrill, Superintendent of Summerville Union High School District in Tuolumne County. We are a rural county of 55,000 people. As you already know from my previous letter dated December 1, 2021, our community has voiced a significant concern with the mandatory vaccination mandate that may be implemented.

We have been very successful in keeping our schools open with the current mask and testing protocols, however, this directive (vaccine mandate) will put the districts in Tuolumne County schools, and more specifically Summerville Union High School District, in jeopardy. Our initial analysis indicates we could lose 50% or more of our students from in-person instruction and/or enrollment in our schools as well as a potential loss of staff if there is a mandate to vaccinate all students and staff and there is only a medical exemption allowed.

As Superintendent of Summerville Union High School District, I ask that in the event that the vaccine becomes mandated for all students and staff to attend school in-person, the State of California maintains the medical, religious, and personal exemptions with regard to the COVID-19 vaccine requirement. Dr. Pan's legislation refers to removing all exemptions with the exception of a medical exemption. His legislation also suggests that the vaccine does not have to be fully FDA approved prior to the mandate taking effect.

In the response that was received from the California Department of Public Health (CDHP) on December 23, 2021 our previous request to allow for personal, religious and medical exemptions had been heard. Quoting the letter: "Pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 120338, such a requirement would include exemptions 'for both medical reasons and personal beliefs.'"

Summerville District counted this as great news for the students, staff and families of Tuolumne County. We shared this response with the community as we started our move forward to communicate some version of normalcy in our schools and our homes.

***Serving the communities of:*** Cold Springs, Long Barn, Mi-Wuk Village, Pinecrest, Sierra Village, Strawberry, Sugar Pine, Tuolumne, Twain Harte

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Even though the letter stated, “Governor Gavin Newsom has directed the CDHP to add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of vaccinations already required for in-person attendance—such as measles, mumps, and rubella—pursuant to the Health and Safety Code sections 120325-120380,” there will still be an option for families to file for an exemption according to the letter.

The newest potential legislation authored by Dr. Pan (SB 871) shows that our voices are not being heard, the guidelines and science behind any potential vaccination are not being held to, and the state is willing to say that families that choose to not have their students vaccinated are not entitled to a free and appropriate public education as stated in the California Constitution.

Summerville Union High School District has continued to work extremely hard in very difficult times to keep our school’s doors open for in-person instruction. Our District has successfully and safely done that since October of 2020 for 100% of our students. The district has done hours of contact tracing in support of our local public health department, and implemented quarantining and isolating of our people as per the CDPH regulations. Summerville Union High School District is asking that you leave the question of whether to vaccinate or not up to the parents of the students that this will impact. If the vaccination mandate is legislated and the possibility of personal exemptions is removed, we will not only lose students from our schools, but staff as well, and the ability to educate our students will be severely undermined.

I would propose that if the vaccine mandate goes through, keep the exemptions in place, and we will continue to do weekly testing of our unvaccinated students, staff and all athletes. The district has made a concerted effort to provide a safe place for students to learn and staff to work through all the time that this procedure has been in place. We will continue to do that since we know that being open for in-person education for all students is what is right for our students and what our state constitution charges us with.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration to this letter.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Merrill  
Superintendent Summerville Union High School District

CC: Brooks Allen, Executive Director, California State Board of Education  
Dr. Tomas Aragon, California State Public Health Officer  
Toni Atkins, Senate Pro Tempore, California State Senate  
Andreas Borgeas, California State Senator  
Frank Bigelow, California State Assembly Member  
Ben Chida, Governor’s Office

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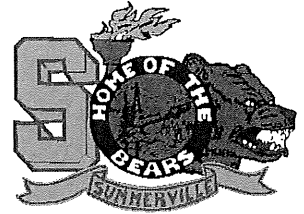
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Connie Leyva, California State Senator (Chair Education Committee)

Patrick O'Donnell, California State Assembly Member (Chair Education Committee)

Dr. Richard Pan, California State Senator

Anthony Rendon, Speaker, California State Assembly

Dr. Sohil Sud, California Department of Public Health

Dr. Eric Sergienko, Interim Public Health Officer, Tuolumne County

Tim Taylor, Small School District Association

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