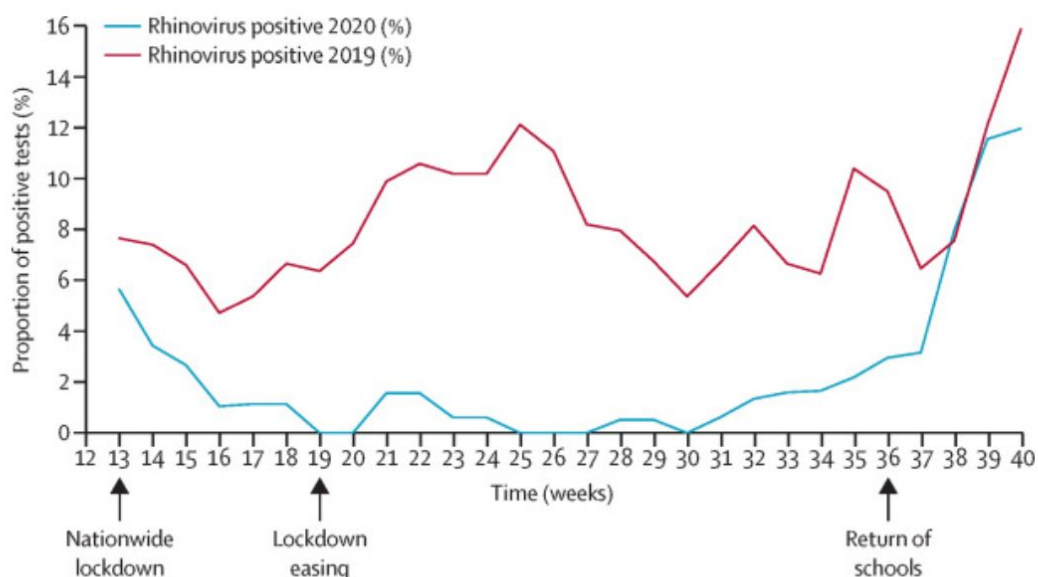


To the State Board of Education:

I am a Connecticut educator and volunteer for Connecticut Public School Advocates (CTPSA). CTPSA is a newly-formed organization, representing a large network of educators across Connecticut, advocating for equitable and safe education. We believe strongly in the value of high-quality education as a right for all students—regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or gender.

Education is a cornerstone of our society, and we understand that opening schools during a pandemic impacts **entire** communities—teachers, administration, paraprofessionals, custodians, bus drivers, food service, students, families, and our first responders. In the past weeks, since schools have reopened, Connecticut has experienced the single-largest COVID-19 infection spike since the start of the pandemic. As such, a Lancet-published study found that with rhinovirus, transmitted in largely the same manner as SARS-CoV-2, “data supports previous reports that children are a major reservoir for rhinovirus infection, and a key driver of transmission to adults.”¹



Source: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30502-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30502-6/fulltext)

Furthermore, the largest COVID-19 study to date finds that children are key to transmitting the virus.² Similarly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says schools are not the safest place during the pandemic, and [in-person learning is a high-risk activity](#).³

Governor Lamont’s narrative that “COVID transmission is a rare event in schools”⁴ is completely false. Every Connecticut county has reached a high risk category for both leading and secondary indicators.⁵ Our community is at grave risk for both loss of life and a highly skilled teacher workforce.

Summary Table

County	Leading			Secondary			Reporting Period
	New COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population per day	Leading Indicator Risk Category	Percent test positivity	New COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population per day	Percent COVID-19-like illness hospital ED visits	Secondary Indicators Risk Category	
Fairfield	51.4	High	8.0%	3.6	9.1%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020
Hartford	42.9	High	5.9%	3.6	3.9%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020
Litchfield	43.3	High	5.7%	1.5	4.0%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020
Middlesex	38.7	High	3.2%	1.6	4.9%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020
New Haven	47.6	High	7.1%	4.6	6.9%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020
New London	31.6	High	4.2%	2.2	4.5%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020
Tolland	33.6	High	3.9%	0.2	3.5%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020
Windham	34.7	High	5.4%	1.4	2.9%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020
Connecticut	45.1	High	6.2%	3.3	5.7%	High	11/07/2020 - 11/20/2020

Data for each reporting period is based on data available on the Wednesday of the following week at 8:30PM. Dates are based on date of specimen collection (cases and positivity), date of hospital admission, or date of ED visit. Case and test counts do not include cases and tests among people residing in congregate settings, such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or correctional facilities. All data are preliminary.

Source: CT Department of Public Health · Created with Datawrapper

Source: <https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/CT-School-Learning-Model-Indicators/ddy2-ijgu/>

Our state administration has relied on the guidance of [the Harvard Global Health Institute](#) in order to determine its leading indicator thresholds. However, the state’s guidance deviates from Harvard’s scientific recommendations for that category, which clearly states that: “in the absence of conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces, schools continue with remote learning.”⁶ Pandemic resilient learning spaces are defined as those with enhanced air ventilation and upgraded filtration, sanitation resources, hygiene practices, pandemic resilient bathrooms, as well as physical and group distancing. The vast majority of our public school spaces are not equipped with these requirements, especially those in already marginalized communities.

CTPSA joins the state bargaining education coalition’s urgent call to follow [statewide steps to secure our schools, or to move to remote learning until January 18th](#).⁷ We also publicly demand economic relief and guaranteed job protection relief for parents, guardians, and families.

We are living in an exceptional moment—one that presents a great challenge for humanity. However, with great challenge, can come great opportunity and growth. The Board’s Four Promises to Students are:

1. Making sure students learn what they need to know to succeed in college, career, and life;
2. Giving students access to great teachers and school leaders;
3. Supporting schools and districts in staying on target with learning goals; and
4. Ensuring students’ non-academic needs are met so they are healthy, happy, and ready to learn.

These are promises not kept until our public schools are fully funded, with **equitable** safeguards in place for **all** students statewide. The state must take steps now to strengthen safety, or else move to all distance learning as we brace for this second wave of the virus.

Thank you,



Nicole Rizzo, M.Ed
Connecticut educator
CTPSA volunteer

¹[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30502-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30502-6/fulltext)

²https://www.princeton.edu/news/2020/09/30/largest-covid-19-contact-tracing-study-date-finds-children-key-spread-evidence?fbclid=IwAR2aVFdjreJv_TJR42tDHvyTNYlszPz9FJM5zo48T3M7cbqvKrzQzcEym0Q

³<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

⁴<https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2020/10-2020/Governor-Lamont-Coronavirus-Update-October-29>

⁵<https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/CT-School-Learning-Model-Indicators/ddy2-ijgu/>

⁶https://globalepidemics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/pandemic_resilient_schools_briefing_72020.pdf

⁷<https://cea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Safe-Successful-Schools-Now-Coalition-11-23.pdf>