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**Wyoming Education Association opposes loosening recommendations on COVID-19 quarantine, calls on parents to screen students for symptoms**

**CHEYENNE, Wyo. (September 27, 2020)** — In direct contradiction to CDC guidelines, the Wyoming Health Department recently announced loosened recommendations for student and staff quarantine protocols after a positive COVID-19 case has been identified in a school building. According to a letter sent to County Health Officers from the State Health Department, under the new recommendations, quarantine is no longer advised for close contacts if “both the case and the close contacts who were within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes were wearing face coverings.”

“Case numbers are skyrocketing in Wyoming,” said WEA President Grady Hutcherson, “why loosen recommendations now? The Wyoming Education Association urges the Wyoming Health Department to reevaluate this decision. There’s no disputing the science; masks work. But, these amended recommendations assume that students and staff are wearing masks—and wearing them correctly— 100% of the time. That’s not happening.”

Nearly 100 cases of COVID-19 have been detected among students and staff in Wyoming schools\*. Still, State Public Health Officer Dr. Alexia Harrist said in a press conference Thursday that they were unaware of any significant transmission occurring between two masked individuals within a classroom.

“Not only are there more identified cases of COVID-19 in Wyoming, but there is a higher percentage of our population testing positive than ever before,” said Hutcherson. “Taking one step forward and two steps back in terms of recommendations and policy around COVID-19 safety isn’t going to keep our schools safe. If we want our schools to remain safe—if we want our schools to remain *open*—now is the time to stay the course and remain diligent in exercising every possible safety precaution to stem the spread of COVID-19.”

The Wyoming Education Association urges parents and guardians to sign the Safe Schools Pledge and commit to screening their children for symptoms each day, before sending them to school. The pledge and a printable symptoms checklist are available at wyoea.org. “Especially now, with recommendations around COVID-19 safety loosening,” said Hutcherson, “it’s imperative that parents, educators, and all community members continue to do their part in keeping Wyoming schools safe. Please, screen your children for symptoms before sending them to school and keep them home if they are sick.”

*\* Latest available numbers as of the week of September 21, 2020*

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*About WEA: Wyoming Education Association (WEA) members work in Wyoming’s schools, colleges, and the university to help improve public education and the lives of Wyoming’s students. WEA members–more than 6,300 strong–provide a wide range of professional education services in communities throughout the state.*

*The purpose of the Wyoming EA is to promote the cause of public education and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Through our more than 100-year history, WEA members have been involved in every struggle and effort to advance the finest of America’s dreams: universal, free public education for every child. Learn more at wyoea.org.*

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