

August 23, 2021

Dear Poudre School District Board Members,

We are writing as faith leaders in the School District to express our sincere appreciation for your leadership for our students, teachers and staff during this complex time.

As we are sure you are aware, in recent days we have been seeing a rise in local anti-mask/anti-precaution, anti-GLBTQ, racist and xenophobic rhetoric. Loud speakers are willing to make claims linking these stances to religious or moral commitments. We want to be clear, as clergy who serve in faith communities across PSD, this does not represent us. Our faith commitments lead us instead to prioritize loving our neighbor, protecting the vulnerable, caring for the sick, and welcoming the immigrant.

With this in mind, we want to underscore our appreciation for the decision to require masks in our schools. According to the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the State of Colorado Health Department, this is the best way to protect the most vulnerable among us, especially those who are immune-compromised and those under 12 who are unable to get the vaccine. The parents we serve tell us how worried they have been for their children, and how appreciative they are of PSD's decision.

Further, we want to underscore our appreciation for the commitment to diversity and inclusion that PSD has made. We appreciate the ways that our teachers and administrators have ensured that kids who are themselves GLBTQ or who come from families with parents who are GLBTQ feel welcome and included and are not subjected to explicit or implicit bullying or exclusion. We know how critical it is to our students' mental health that they are welcomed fully for who they are, and for who their families are.

Finally, we have heard from parents about a rise in anti-Muslim, racist, and anti-immigrant sentiment after the events in Afghanistan. It is important that PSD works with community leaders to ensure that this sentiment is not tolerated within our schools. We value any efforts in our schools that teach students about racism, the importance of religious diversity and freedom, and that counter xenophobia. Please let us know how we can be of support to you as you navigate the best way to protect our students and continue to ensure that all students feel safe and welcome in our schools.

Thank you for your service and dedication in these complex times. We hold you all in our prayers.

Sincerely,

Rev. Leta Arndt Behrens, Our Saviour's ELCA  
Rev. Hal Chorpensing, Plymouth Congregational (UCC)  
Rev. Krista Dias, St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
Pastor Steve Goering, Mennonite Church USA  
Rev. Gretchen Haley, Foothills Unitarian Church  
Rabbi Hillel Katzir, Jewish Action Network of No. Co  
Rev. Zachary Martinez, Sojourn Mennonite Church  
Rev. Joseph Moore, Presbyterian Foundation (PCUSA)

Rev. Sean Neil-Barron, Foothills Unitarian Church  
Rev. Dr. Corey Nelson, Senior Pastor, First Presbyterian  
Rev. Tom Rhodes, Unitarian Universalist Association  
Rev. Melissa St. Clair, Heart of the Rockies Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Rev. Kimberly Salico-Diehl, American Baptist Church  
Rev. Christopher Watkins Lamb, Chaplain  
Rev. David Williams, Abyssinian Christian Church