
From: Patricia Robertson <xpannk@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 7:41 AM
To: BOS <BOS@mono.ca.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Mono County Families Need Support

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[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

Dear Clerk,

I would like this public comment, below, to be read into the record this morning. I am unable to attend the meeting, as I am virtual learning with my child as well as travelling for a doctor's appointment.

The email below was sent to the CAO and the Board of Supervisors already.

Thank you,
Patricia Robertson
978-809-2515

From: Patricia Robertson <xpannk@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 10, 2022 9:11 PM
To: Robert Lawton <rlawton@mono.ca.gov>
Subject: Mono County Families Need Support

You don't often get email from xpannk@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

Dear Mono County Supervisors,

I am copying you to my letter to the Mammoth Unified School District, because it seems relevant in relation to the general lack of support felt by Mono County families.

Not only has MUSD closed schools for 3 weeks, which seems arbitrary and convenient for those employees that are able to work from home, but First 5 has ceased in-person home visiting. What other support systems for families will we take away before limiting tourism? When will we pursue a more balanced system?

Families are isolated, and struggling with multiple stressors (multiple children, working with children, cost of living, multiple jobs, etc.).

We need advocates that push for support systems. This current school closure appears to put profits before people and it is my hope that any tourism proceeds from this discriminatory policy will go towards family-first support networks.

I have attached my letter to the MUSD Board of Directors. So far, 15 families have reached out to me to sign on, and 26 have signed the online version (I still need to de-duplicate, though I believe this represents a close-to-accurate number at 15 + 26).

You can view my online letter here, and I have attached a PDF with names of those that have contacted me directly:

English: <https://chnng.it/Mm5HFxxq>

Spanish: <https://chnng.it/Pj5dcYgJ>

Thank you,

Patricia Robertson

978-809-2515

Jennifer Wildman, Superintendent, jwildman@mammothusd.org
Colleen Moxley, Health Coordinator, cmoxley@mammothusd.org

MUSD School Board

Alonso Escobar, alonsoescobar@mammothusd.org

Tom Painter, tpainter@mammothusd.org

Shana Stapp, sstapp@mammothusd.org

Lou Stewart, lstewart@mammothusd.org

Kathleen Taylor, ktaylor@mammothusd.org

Mono County Public Health

Bryan Wheeler, Public Health Director, bwheeler@mono.ca.gov

Caryn Slack, Public Health Officer, cslack@mono.ca.gov

January 9, 2022

RE: THREE-WEEK CLOSURE OF MAMMOTH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dear Mammoth Unified School District, Mono County, and Town of Mammoth Lakes Leadership,

I am writing as a parent of young children in Mono County regarding the closure of our public school district for the period January 10, 2022 - January 28, 2022. This three-week closure feels discriminatory towards local families, who already face severe disadvantages in regards to daycare, housing, cost of living, access to mental health services, and more.

The reason this seems discriminatory is because **no other group activities have been impacted.** Tourists are still invited to come and recreate, dine, access healthcare, utilize the gym, go to the movies, and otherwise spread the virus in our community. ***And our working families are still expected to show up for work.*** So what does this mean for our children? Daycares have waiting lists, family members have to work, and parents cannot afford to stay home from work lest risk not being able to afford rent and mortgages.

Did you know that on average households in Mono County maintain 1.2 - 1.4 jobs per adult?¹ Households need to maintain multiple jobs in order to afford to live in Mono County. According to Census data, 30% of Mono County households pay more than 30% of their income on housing

¹ Mono County Housing Needs Assessment and Residential Survey, 2017, pp. 10, 16, https://monocounty.ca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning_division/page/29821/mono_county_housing_needs_assessment_2017.pdf.

expenses, which is above the federally recognized standard for affordability.² Many parents have exhausted vacation and sick time to stay home with quarantined household members and ***otherwise do not have the resources to work 40+ hours/week per person and care for school-aged children.*** Unlike many other industries, our tourism-based economy does not lend itself to the ability for everyone to work remotely.

Do we bring our children to work with us, where they will be exposed to COVID anyway? Are we able to? Does this make sense? Or do our children belong in school with their teachers, trusted adults, and peers? I am curious to know, what percentage of MUSD families have parents that are able to work remotely? Considering that approximately 60% of jobs are in the Accommodations, Food Service, Retail, and Recreation industries, I assume it's much less than that.³ Many workplaces are already experiencing staff shortages and this school closure will only exacerbate that.

Let's not discount those who are able to work remotely—caring for children and working remotely is extremely difficult and not a viable solution. Remote workers are likely working on the fly, taking calls in the car, during meals, enduring Zoom meetings with their screaming kids in the background, sending emails on their phone, and catching up on hours late at night. And if before we were able to spend what limited free time enjoying our beautiful surroundings, it seems we are able to enjoy it even less now. We are suffering mentally, physically, financially, our relationships are suffering, our children's education and social development is suffering. Where is the support?

Families in Mono County need support. It often feels as if no one is looking out for us. Homes are too expensive, rentals are impossible to find, daycare is scarce, etc. It could be perceived that Mono County and the Town of Mammoth Lakes do not want families to stay in our community. Perhaps a model that includes only second-homeowners and a transient, young workforce is preferred. As you know, many families have made that interpretation and left our community for more supportive environments. If I had to make a prediction, I would guess that the ongoing lack of support for families in Mono County will have profound impacts on the make-up of our community in the long-term. And each time a local family leaves, it becomes increasingly harder to attract another one.

Families might feel better supported if the closure came with some form of support. Here are some ideas for consideration:

² 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates, accessed January 9, 2022.

³ Town of Mammoth Lakes, Community Housing Action Plan, 2017, p. A-21, <https://ca-mammothlakes2.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/8169/Part-1-Housing-Needs-Accomplishments-and-Challenges?bidId=>.

- Request that the National Guard help provide school programming (fill prospective staffing shortages due to COVID),
- Offer shorter, cohort-specific school weeks (M/W versus T/Th); this might allow for more staffing coverage and limit potential exposure,
- Allow Husky Club to operate with small peer groups, to minimize exposure,
- Provide programmed activities during the closure with limited number of spaces (camps, etc.),
- Give discounted group ski/snowboard lessons and/or gym/trampoline passes,
- Program the Community or Wellness Center with activities and study halls,
- Coordinate outside playgroups (sledding, or Bishop City Park, etc.),
- Provide financial stipends to help cover the costs associated with not being able to work,
- Any other type of support that would allow parents to continue to work.
- Communicate supportive response initiatives so that all families have access.

Unfortunately, at this moment it seems like schools are taking on the brunt of the responsibility for community spread of the virus, when we know this isn't the case. If schools need to be closed, then careful consideration of higher risk activities should also be undertaken. In the future, I hope that you will more thoroughly research the impacts of your decisions on the lives of our local families, and consider policies that are applied equally and/or provide tangible support systems for local families and our workforce.

Sincerely,

Patricia and Todd Robertson

Town of Mammoth Lakes and parents to children ages 5 (Grade TK) and 2

Sophie and Tim Gallagher

Mono County parents to child in Grade 1

Amanda and Cory Rice

Town of Mammoth Lakes parents to child in Grade 1

Emily Wright

Town of Mammoth Lakes parent to a child in Grade 1

Kristen Ripley

Town of Mammoth Lakes parent to a child in Grade 1

Ashley Toups

Town of Mammoth Lakes, parent to child in Grade 1, Vice President MES PTO

Gillian Parrish
Children in MES and MMS

Michele Bunes Glass
Town of Mammoth Lakes, parent to children Grades 4 and 7

Maria Altenbach (Vargas)
Town of Mammoth Lakes, parent to a homeschooled child

Allison Mcdonell Page
Town of Mammoth Lakes, parent to child in Grade 9

Natalie Post
Town of Mammoth Lakes, parent to child in Grade K

Audrey McTague
Parent to child in Grade 1 and a 4 year old

Randi Krampe and Steve Stallings
Town of Mammoth Lakes, parents to a child in Grade 3

Mathew and Katherine Riggs
Town of Mammoth Lakes, parents to children in Grade 1 and Grade 3

Jacqueline Espitia-Ramirez
Town of Mammoth Lakes, parent to XXX

Jaime Sallee
Parent of child in Grade 1

CC:

Mono County Administrator
Bob Lawton, CAO, rlawton@mono.ca.gov

Mono County Board of Supervisors
Jennifer Kreitz, jkreitz@mono.ca.gov
Rhonda Duggan, rduggan@mono.ca.gov
Bob Gardner, bgardner@mono.ca.gov

John Peters, jpeters@mono.ca.gov
Stacy Corless, scorless@mono.ca.gov

Town of Mammoth Lakes
Dan Holler, Town Manager, dholler@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov

Town of Mammoth Lakes Town Council
Lynda Salcido, lsalcido@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov
Kirk Stapp, kstapp@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov
John Wentworth, jwentworth@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov
Sarah Rea, srea@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov
Bill Sauser, bsauser@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov

U.S. Congressman, Jay Obernolte, California's 8th District in the U.S. House of Representative,
via website, <https://obernolte.house.gov/contact>