

Charles Lee Mudd Jr.  
Principal Attorney  
clm@muddlaw.com

# MUDD LAW

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**CHICAGO (MAIN OFFICE)**  
411 S. Sangamon Street  
Suite 1B  
Chicago, Illinois 60607  
312.964.5051 Telephone

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**ATTORNEYS BY ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY**

**Principal**  
Charles Lee Mudd Jr.\*

**Associates**  
Aimee Clare†  
Graham A. Deurance†

**Of Counsel**  
Anne Chestney Mudd†  
Katie Sunstrom ††

Admitted Key:  
\* IL, IN, CT, UT  
† IL  
†† TX  
\*\* UT

Ms. Julie O'Connor, President  
Ms. Lisa Garvin, Vice-President  
Ms. Meredith Adler  
Ms. Meghan Cahill  
Mr. Brett Lettiere  
Ms. Kate Heit  
Ms. Caitlin Sendaydiego  
Western Springs School District 101  
Board of Education  
4225 Wolf Road  
Western Springs, Illinois 60558

**HOUSTON**  
1100 NASA Parkway  
Suite 420L  
Houston, Texas 77058  
713.588.0168 Telephone

**PARK CITY**  
311 Main Street  
PO Box 1553  
Park City, Utah 84060  
435.640.1786 Telephone

**Facsimile For All Offices**  
312.803.1667

**Re: Hybrid v. Full In-Person Education for District 101  
Recommendation to Remain Hybrid In-Person Education**

Dear District 101 Board of Education:

I write to you as a parent with a student in Western Springs School District 101 (“District”). Recently, some parents proposed returning to full-time in-person education.<sup>1</sup> I oppose returning to *full-time* in-person education at this time and strongly encourage the District and its Board of Education (“Board”) to maintain *hybrid* in-person education through at least the end of the second quarter.<sup>2</sup> Before I explain the foundation for my perspective, I want to thank you as well as all of the administration and teachers within District 101 for the fantastic efforts made and work performed on behalf of our children, our families, and our community. I know it has not been easy these last several months for anyone.

### **Executive Summary**

Because circumstances in our society and local community have not improved and only

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<sup>1</sup> From my understanding, no one opposes maintaining a remote learning option for those who want to exercise that option. As such, apart from discussing it in passing, I do not focus on this option. I believe this should remain for those families who want and/or need it.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, the Board should consider the relevant circumstances on an ongoing basis, as I imagine it already does. However, I also believe that, should the Board determine a change should be made, any change should be implemented as a new quarter begins. In this manner, the District can maintain as much stability for the students as possible. See *infra*. For the reasons below, however, the second quarter should remain *hybrid*.

expect to become worse over the next couple of months, I oppose any effort to return to full-time in-person education for our students in District 101. Given the significant amount of effort you expended in deliberating and reaching a decision on proceeding with a hybrid model, I will not revisit arguments supporting such a decision. Indeed, I presume the decision to have been and remains valid. Rather, I focus my discussion below on the evidence and science that support remaining vigilant and maintaining the *status quo* as we move into Fall and Winter. In short, the statistics reveal an overall increase in COVID-19 numbers. Scientists indicate the second (or third) wave will be forthcoming (if not already present). And, the fact that our local community has not experienced worse numbers can be attributed, in part, to the measures adopted and implemented by this Board and District. Therefore, the Board and the District should maintain the status quo of *hybrid* in-person education rather than unwisely return – at this juncture – to full-time in-person education.

### **Background on Our Position**

During the Summer, Katherine (for those unfamiliar, my spouse) and I deliberated extensively on whether to send our children to camp and, upon return to school, *any* in-person education. We decided not to send our children to camp. As to school, we leaned very heavily toward a remote only option. In fact, I contend that prior to hearing of District leadership, we convinced ourselves that remote only would be the safest approach for our children and family – particularly as my parents live in the local community and we included them in our family circle.

Nonetheless, we attended the online meetings held by the District. We listened to our school leaders discuss the significant deliberations that went into offering hybrid in-person education. We listened to the great lengths and measures to be implemented by the District such that its hybrid in-person education would remain safe for our children. Despite significant reservations, they persuaded us.

They convinced us for several reasons. First, the long history of exceptional leadership provided by, particularly but certainly not exclusively, Mr. Daniel Chick and Dr. Brian Barnhart. Second, the care for our students and the deep understanding of all of the myriad concerns came across in the presentations. Third, we realized the extent to which measures had been significantly thought out and were to be implemented. Finally, we also realized that our children needed the social exposure with friends and personal interaction with their teachers. In short, it seemed the best compromise for all concerns and all those concerned.

At the conclusion of the presentations, discussions, and answers to questions, we decided to let our son join the hybrid in-person model. And, to be quite sure, Katherine and I both expressed how fortunate we happened to be to live within the community of District 101.

### **What This Letter *Is Not* and *Is* About**

As I mention above, I do not revisit the merits of hybrid learning over full-time in-person remote learning. You already possess this information. And, the Board and the District deliberated these issues previously and found the hybrid model to be the best solution with

which to begin the school year. I also do not address the merits of any particular measures implemented to ensure the hybrid in-person learning approach succeeded. I imagine there have been some tweaks already implemented. I also expect that some changes *within* the hybrid model may be implemented to improve it based on observations over the last quarter. But, I also do not address any of these specifics. Rather, I focus my discussion below on why the District must maintain the *hybrid* model for the next quarter.

That being said, I want to make clear that I do – at the right juncture - want my children return to school full-time. We can also all agree that education must continue and schools cannot remain closed.<sup>3</sup> Any gap in education causes harm to students, their futures, and the future of our country.<sup>4</sup> Yet, this does not necessitate a return to a normalcy that includes full-time education in a heightened COVID-19 period.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, schools need to re-open safely. They also need to adopt strategies and measures to accentuate strengths. Our District *accomplished this* by adopting a hybrid in-person learning program. Thus, we succeeded in re-opening education in this District *safely* and *wisely*. We should not now be shortsighted and abandon the very measures that contributed to our success in doing so.

Although I hope our students do return to full-time in-person education before Spring, I simply do not believe it safe to do so *at this time*. We need to protect our children; the staff, teachers, and administration with whom they interact; the families to whom the children return at the end of the day (including parents, grandparents, siblings, and other extended members of families); the same constituencies at siblings' schools; the people with whom the family members work; and, the broader community. And thus, the remainder of this letter explains why *now* is not the time to change the dynamics of our children's hybrid learning environment within the District and local community.

### **Evidence Does Not Warrant Change from Summer Decisions**

The evidence overwhelmingly supports remaining in an hybrid in-person learning environment.

#### *Children Contract and Carry COVID-19*

Though the likelihood may be low, we know that children can contract COVID-19. In fact, current CDC statistics report that children aged 5-17 represent about 7% of the cases

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<sup>3</sup> Although this seems intuitive, there could exist areas in the country and/or world where schools continue to be closed.

<sup>4</sup> OECD, “The Economic Impacts of Learning Losses” (September 2020).

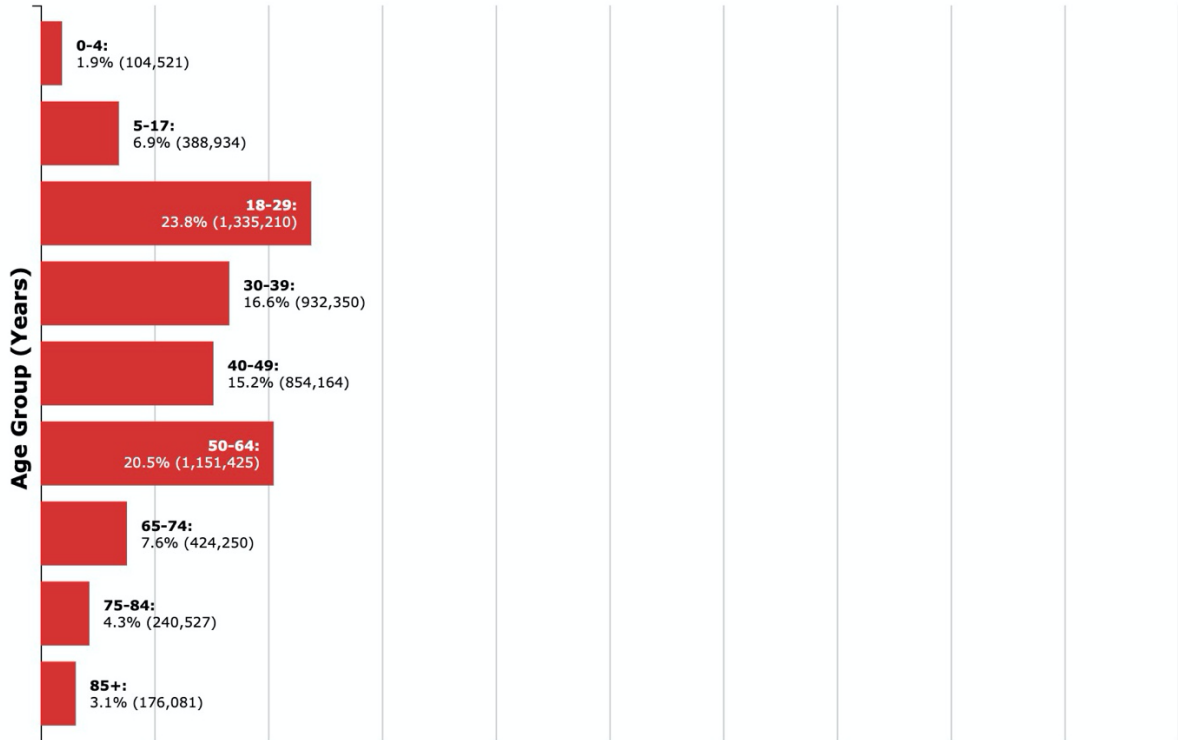
<sup>5</sup> See *id.*, p. 5 (implicitly recognizing a return to what had been cannot readily occur and suggests measures as schools learn to adapt to different re-opening strategies).

nationwide:<sup>6</sup>

### Cases by Age Group:



Data from 5,805,176 cases. Age group was available for 5,607,462 (96%) cases.



This is not a statistically insignificant number. In fact, it nearly amounts to the combined percentage for those aged 75 or above. It also falls within 10% of the percentage (7.6%) for adults aged 65-74.<sup>7</sup> Granted, this does not reflect the percentage within the specific age group that test positive. Nonetheless, among those who do test positive, nearly 7% are children aged 5-17.

We also know that children – whether symptomatic or asymptomatic – can transmit COVID-

<sup>6</sup> <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographics> (reflecting 6.9% for those aged 5-17 as of October 13 2020). This increased slightly from July that had a rate of 6.6%. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/prepare-safe-return.html> (last visited October 13, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the combined percentage of those reporting COVID-19 who are 65 and older (15%) nearly reflects their aged group's representation in the overall US population at the time of the 2010 Census (13%). In contrast, the percentage of those reporting COVID-19 aged 5-17 (6.9%) reflects 41% of the population within the age bracket in the 2010 Census (16.8%).

19.<sup>8</sup> In fact, a recent CDC study suggests that “young persons might be playing an increasingly important role in community transmission.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, we can find countless stories reporting children or children activities as the source for certain outbreaks.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kelly, Morgan, “Largest COVID-19 contact tracing study to date finds children key to spread, evidence of superspreaders,” Princeton University, Sept. 30, 2020 (Study of half-million people in India suggests children are key to spreading Covid) <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2020/09/30/largest-covid-19-contact-tracing-study-date-finds-children-key-spread-evidence> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); Laxminarayan, Ramanan, “Epidemiology and transmission dynamics of COVID-19 in two Indian states,” Science, Sept. 30, 2020 (same) <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/09/29/science.abd7672> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); Harvard Medical School, “Silent Spreaders? Children may play a larger role in community spread of COVID-19 than previously thought,” (Aug. 20, 2020) (Reporting on study that found that children are likely to asymptotically spread the virus and recommending that schools implement safety measures that do not rely on symptom detection) <https://hms.harvard.edu/news/silent-spreaders> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); Yonker, Lael M., et al., “Pediatric Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2): Clinical Presentation, Infectivity, and Immune Responses,” Journal of Pediatrics, Aug. 19, 2020 (Children a possible source of contagion) [https://www.jpeds.com/article/S0022-3476\(20\)31023-4/fulltext](https://www.jpeds.com/article/S0022-3476(20)31023-4/fulltext) (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); Heald-Sargent, Taylor, et al., “Age-Related Differences in Nasopharyngeal Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) Levels in Patients With Mild to Moderate Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19),” JAMA Pediatrics, July 30, 2020 (study conducted in Chicago found older infected children had similar levels of viral nucleic acid to adults and younger children had 10x to 100x more viral nucleic acid than adults) <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2768952> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020);

<sup>9</sup> COVID-19 Trends Among School-Aged Children — United States, March 1–September 19, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Bjorklund, Kelly, et al., “The Swedish COVID-19 Response Is a Disaster. It Shouldn’t Be a Model for the Rest of the World,” Times Magazine, Oct. 14, 2020 (Sweden not closing schools contributing factor to their poor COVID response) <https://time.com/5899432/sweden-coronavirus-disaster/> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); Stewart, Tanner, WEARTV, “Pace High School tops statewide list with 45 coronavirus cases,” Oct. 14, 2020 (Large outbreak at Florida high school even when students were following guidelines) <https://weartv.com/news/local/pace-high-school-tops-statewide-list-with-45-coronavirus-cases> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); Li, David K., “Monmouth University 'super-spreader event' led to 125 Covid cases on New Jersey campus,” NBC News, Oct. 13, 2020 (Large outbreak on college campus after an off campus event) <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/monmouth-university-super-spreader-event-led-125-covid-cases-new-n1243150> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); 37 People Test Positive For COVID-19 After Long Island Sweet Sixteen, County Executive Calls Party ‘A Superspreader Event’, CBSN New York, Oct. 13, 2020 (Child’s party causes mass outbreak with 37 total people catching COVID and 28 of them being students) <https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2020/10/13/long-island-covid-superspreader-party/> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); Lourgos, Angie Leventis, “CDC: Teen gave COVID-19 to 11 relatives across 4 states, including Illinois, during a family vacation. Case is a cautionary tale as holidays approach,

Consequently, the measures adopted at a school protect not only the students but the broader local community.<sup>11</sup>

*Illinois, Cook County, and Local Numbers Warrant Caution*

Perhaps, a viable argument might be made to completely reopen schools in a state with relatively few cases reported over the last several days or weeks. This is not Illinois.

Recent CDC reporting places Illinois third among states in COVID-19 cases reported over the last seven days behind only California and Texas.<sup>12</sup> This may not be surprising given Illinois places fifth or six in population based on the 2010 Census and 2019 predictions, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Yet, Illinois' positive COVID-19 cases constitute 80% of California's COVID-19 cases, a state with three times the population of Illinois. Also, Illinois' COVID-19 numbers constitute three times that of New York, despite New York enjoying a population 1.5 times that of Illinois. As such, the number of positive cases reported in Illinois cannot be explained simply by the size of its population relative to other states.

More locally, when I began this letter on October 13, 2020, Cook County reflected a daily positivity rate of 5.7% and a 7-day rolling average positivity rate of 5.9 as of the reporting date October 10, 2020.<sup>14</sup> The next day, October 14, 2020, Cook County reflected a daily positivity rate of 7.4% (the highest by 1.4% since September 11, 2020) and a 7-day rolling average positivity rate of 5.9%.<sup>15</sup> Today, when I walk through the final edits, Cook County reflected a daily positivity rate of 8.3% (the highest by 2.3% since September 11, 2020) and a

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experts say, Chicago Tribune, Oct. 12, 2020 (Thirteen-year-old girl spreads COVID to her family) <https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-cdc-report-family-gathering-local-20201012-7f7i6sosi5ep7dhoq3e2bpgavi-story.html> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020); Decock, Luke, "Raleigh-area junior hockey teams' road trip turns into superspreader COVID event," News & Observer, Oct. 3, 2020 (Hockey team's trip causes super spreader event, even when following guidelines) <https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/article246202850.html> (last visited Oct. 14, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases\\_casesinlast7days](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesinlast7days) (last visited October 13, 2020).

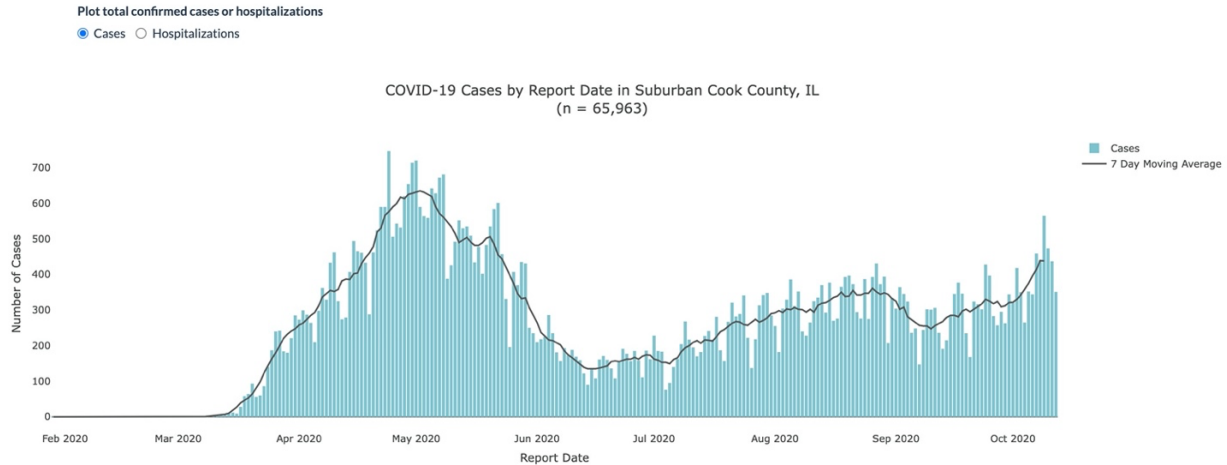
<sup>13</sup>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_states\\_and\\_territories\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_by\\_population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_states_and_territories_of_the_United_States_by_population) (last visited October 13, 2020).

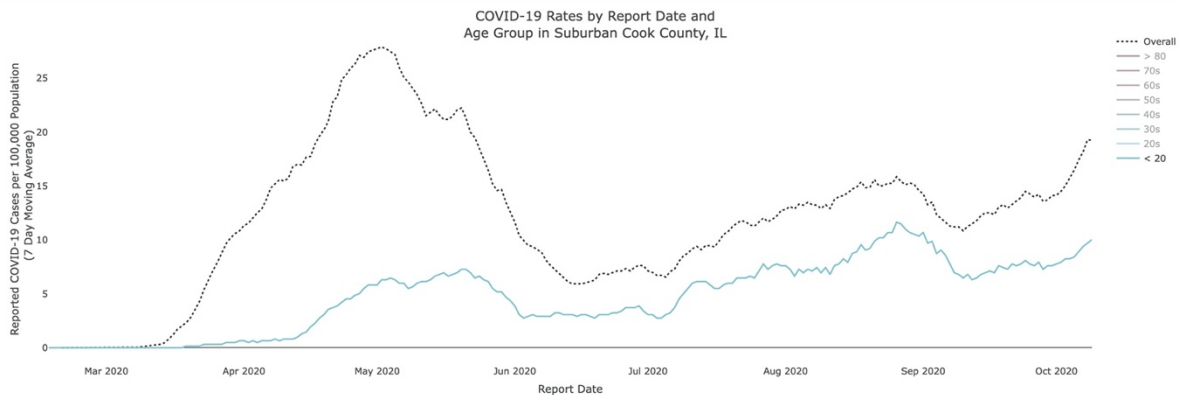
<sup>14</sup> <https://dph.illinois.gov/regionmetrics?regionID=10> (last visited October 13, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* Let us all hope that the 7-day rolling positivity rate remains below 6—~~much worse~~ 7 or 8 percent in our community. However, should the 7-day rolling positivity rate increase above 8, this letter should not be construed as an argument for maintaining a hybrid model. Indeed, should the Board and District conclude that all indicia suggest a return to remote only, we will agree with such a recommendation.

7-day rolling average positivity rate of 6.2%!<sup>16</sup> In just two days, the daily positivity rate jumped 2.6% and the 7-day rolling average increased 0.3%. This clearly reflects an increase from where it happened to be 30 days ago.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the number of positive cases within Suburban Cook County reflects an upward trend:<sup>18</sup>



Even within the age group of those less than 20, the positive cases reflect an upward trend with a pattern nearly similar to that of the overall population since July:<sup>19</sup>



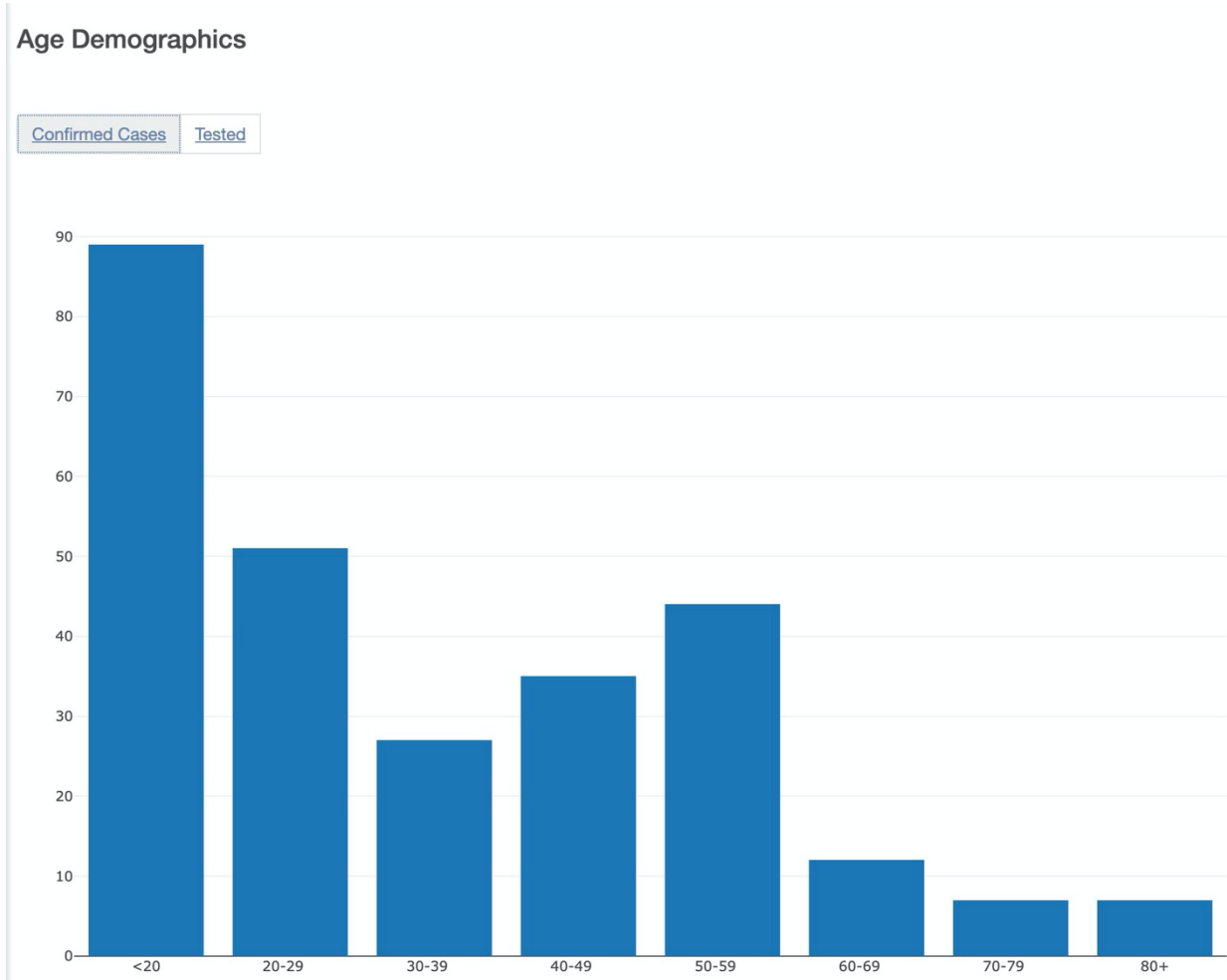
<sup>16</sup> Id.

<sup>17</sup> Id.

<sup>18</sup> <https://dph.illinois.gov/regionmetrics?regionID=10> (last visited October 13, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> <https://ccdphcd.shinyapps.io/covid19/> (last visited October 13, 2020) (though reflecting in the title South Suburban Illinois, the report states “Case data is updated Monday through Friday. Includes all confirmed cases under the jurisdiction of the Cook County Department of Public Health (excludes Chicago, Evanston, Oak Park, Skokie, and Stickney Township).”)

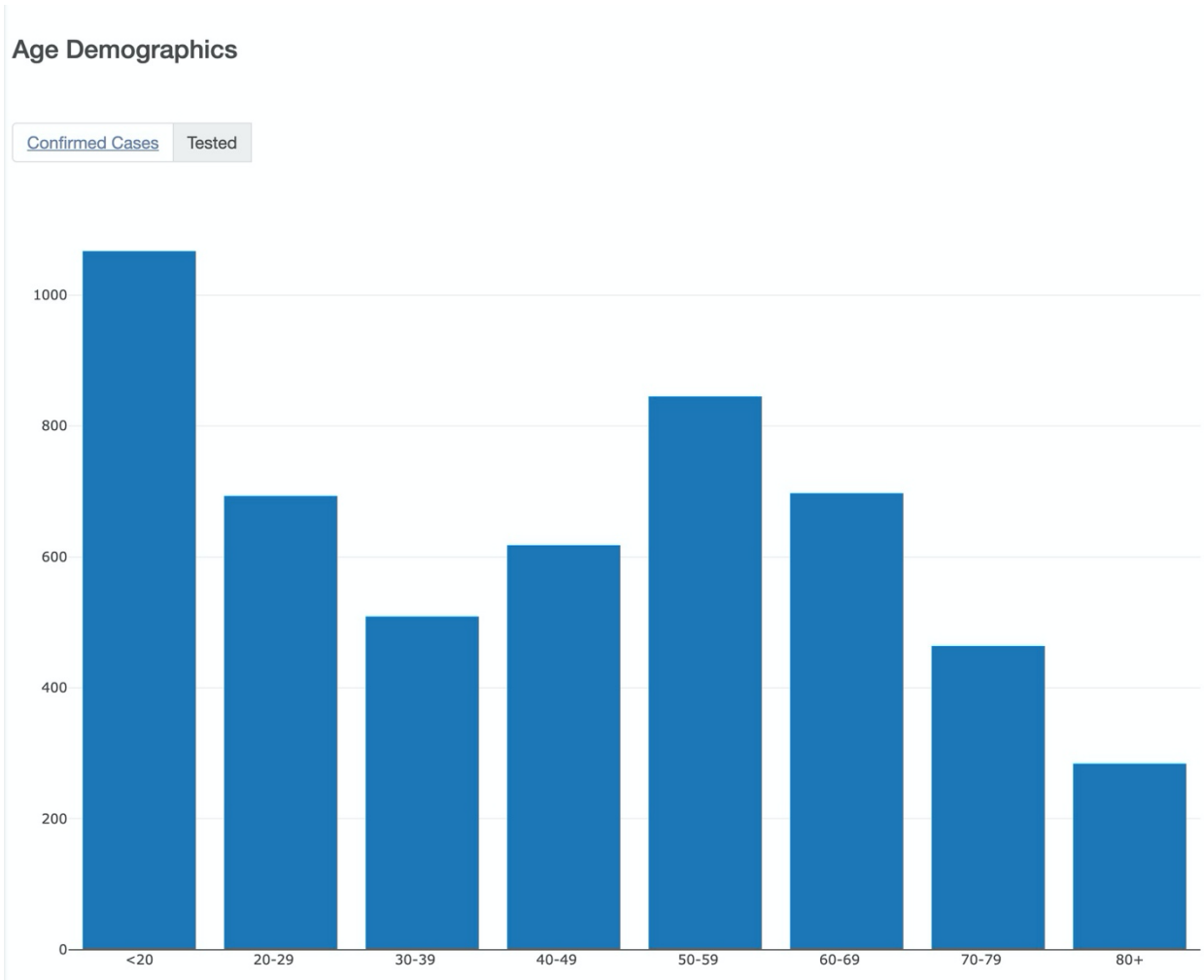
In fact, of those tested within our zip code, the highest number of positive cases arises within the 20 and under age bracket:<sup>20</sup>



<sup>20</sup> <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/covid19-statistics> (last visited October 13, 2020).



Of course, there have been more tests among those 20 and younger:



Yet, the proportionality of those positive appears higher among the younger age bracket.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the trends across the population reflect an increase in infection rates within Illinois. This includes our younger population. As such, there exists *no statistical indication* supporting a reduction in measures to keep our children, our teachers, our families, and our community safe. In particular, though there may have been a dip in positivity in the first part of September, this has evaporated.

### *Second Wave Coming*

The evidence thus far should be convincing in and of itself to not increase in-person activities, in this context education, at this time. And yet, there exist more compelling reasons to maintain the *status quo*. Most importantly, a second wave may occur this Fall. Forbes identified eight (8) reasons contributing to this possibility: (1) lower humidity and

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<sup>21</sup> Id.

lower temperatures; (2) the false sense of “everything is OK” with businesses reopening; (3) shifting from outdoor to indoor gatherings; (4) the flu and other respiratory illnesses; (5) people lax on precautions; (6) misinformation campaigns; (7) lack of a coordinated national plan; and, (8) schools reopening.<sup>22</sup> And, as has been reported, the second wave in the Fall could be worse than what has been experienced thus far.<sup>23</sup> Of course, some contend that the United States experienced a second wave and now may be entering a third wave.<sup>24</sup> A Second or Third Wave may not be certain. However, with experts predicting such a resurgence as likely, it makes absolutely no logical sense to lower our guard and become less vigilant. In fact, in the face of such evidence and science, it would be negligent to do so.

### *Returning to Children and Stability*

In nearing the end of this letter, I return to our children and the need for stability. With the possibility of another wave this Fall and Winter, we should not embark on a change to the students’ education routine that may, once again, be disrupted. While some students may be suffering difficulties (and we certainly should secure the resources to help them), most of our children – I presume – adapted to the new routine that began at the start of the school year. The “stability” of this “new normal” routine should be maintained for the time being. We should not entice them with a return to full-time in-school learning only to possibly pull them back to hybrid or, worse yet, a return to remote-only should cases continue to rise.

### **Conclusion**

For the foregoing reasons, this Board and District should maintain the *status quo* and continue with hybrid in-person education. That being said, rather than merely adopt a position without a solution, I also recommend that this Board and District continue its diligence and monitor developments on an ongoing basis. If not already established, this could involve a committee of interested parents from all perspectives. Thank you for listening. If ever the Board or District needs help in any manner, I will make myself available.

Sincerely,



Charles Lee Mudd Jr.

CLM/mms

cc: Daniel Chick and Brian Barnhart

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2020/10/10/8-reasons-covid-19-coronavirus-could-get-worse-with-fall-second-wave/#d3a3ddc2fca7> (last visited October 14, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/first-and-second-waves-of-coronavirus> (last visited October 14, 2020)

<sup>24</sup> <https://time.com/5893916/covid-19-coronavirus-third-wave/> (last visited October 14, 2020).