



Ottawa County

Board of Commissioners

Roger A. Bergman
Chairperson

Matthew R. Fenske
Vice-Chairperson

Statement of Roger Bergman, Chair
Ottawa County Board of Commissioners
Wednesday, August 25, 2021

I was impressed with the number of citizens who showed up yesterday to express themselves, but very disappointed by the organized effort to bully and intimidate anyone who dared to speak in favor of a mask mandate in schools. County-wide epidemic orders are extremely rare and typically generate intense controversy, which is why our state legislature has insured that those decisions are made by the county health officers exclusively. There is no question that the Board of Commissioners cannot make this decision and cannot reverse this decision. Legally, the Board cannot fire the health officer for making this decision nor can it use its power of the purse to bully her into rescinding the decision. There were some legitimate issues that the Board will ask the County's health officer to address such as the timing of her decision, the type of masks that will be available to children, and how students with legitimate medical reasons can more easily obtain exemptions. I wish to remind everyone that most of the students in the United States will be in school with masks, as they were last year. The temporary area local health orders this year only apply to K-6 and, unlike last year, will not apply outdoors. The Ottawa County Board of Commissioners sincerely hope that the order will expire during the fall semester by its own terms, that we can keep the schools open this year, and that we can return to complete normalcy by the spring semester.

Roger A. Bergman

Francisco C. Garcia Joseph S. Baumann Douglas R. Zylstra Allen Dannenberg Randall J. Meppelink
Kyle J. Terpstra James H. Holtvluwer Philip D. Kuyers Gregory J. DeJong