



PO Box 19258
Phoenix AZ, 85005-9258
director@secularaz.org

October 28, 2021

Chandler Unified School District Governing Board
1525 W. Frye Road
Chandler AZ, 85224

Dear Governing Board Members,

We write to you today as concerned citizens witnessing the increasing anti-science rhetoric on display at many of your recent board meetings. At the most recent meeting on October 27, 2021, an individual, claiming to be an "expert" asserted that the COVID-19 vaccination is a "deadly poison" and that the COVID-19 virus was not real, but an attempt at some kind of deep-state takeover, ending her comments with an antisemitic conspiracy theory.

We were dismayed that little was said by the board to counter these falsehoods and vitriolic hate speech. As board members, you have a responsibility to not only provide students with equitable academic opportunities, you also have the responsibility of keeping students and staff safe.

Secular Coalition for Arizona (SCA) was formed over ten years ago to be Arizona's voice for secular government, and strives to promote scientific information, and to keep religious dogma out of our healthcare systems and schools.

As you likely know, the COVID-19 virus has taken the lives of over 21,000 Arizonans and over 742,000 Americans. Recent reports also indicate that those who are vaccinated, though

still able to contract the Delta variant, are far less likely to get sick or die than the unvaccinated.

As a public school district, it is your duty to provide scientifically accurate information to students, and to keep them safe while in your care. Unfortunately, we have seen little of that since the beginning of the pandemic. Instead, when confronted with these dangerous and false narratives, the CUSD board has failed to acknowledge them.

The CUSD board and administration have remained largely silent, refusing scientific support of mask mandates, and in-turn, the situation has escalated. Not only does COVID-19 still continue to plague our communities, but these incidents happening at school board meetings across the country have resulted in the US Department of Justice stepping in to investigate threats made to school board members.

By keeping silent and not addressing these threats, we believe you put our students, staff, and communities in danger. We urge you to follow the science, implement a mask mandate, and speak out when misinformation and conspiracy theories are spouted at your meetings.

As a leading advocate for democratic values and the protection of our Constitution, SCA can provide your district with information about legal protocols in public education settings. Additionally, we would be happy to partner with your district to create a curriculum to educate your community about the constitution and to provide your students with critical thinking programming to avoid falling prey to conspiracy theories.

We look forward to partnering with you to keep your students, staff, and community members safe and informed.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Casteen, M.Ed.

Executive Director, Secular Coalition for Arizona