

April 12, 2022

Dear Senators Brock and Perchlik,

For many years I have appreciated the work Senator Brock has put into evaluating the effectiveness of government programs. He has had the courage to look objectively at the data and question policies, no matter how popular they are. His work has helped increase the trust Vermonters have in their State government, knowing that there is a check-and-balance system watching out for us.

A cost/benefit analysis is a necessary step in order to be sure we do not cause more harm than good when attempting to address problems. I recently found the work of the *Government Accountability Committee*, as well as a document titled *Lessons Learned Workgroup* (May 28, 2020). It appears that your committee understands the need for ongoing analysis, as evidenced by the fact that you formed a workgroup as early as May of 2020 to begin analyzing the State's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Since the fall of 2020 I have been asking the Vermont Department of Health and the Agency of Education to conduct a cost/benefit analysis of their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Please see the *Open Letters* I wrote last spring and summer, attached.) To this date, I have had no response to my requests, and there appears to be no effort inside these agencies to analyze the effects of the unprecedented measures which they implemented across various settings and populations.

The Government Accountability Committee seems an appropriate next place to bring this request at this time. In a document titled *Lessons Learned Workgroup* (5/28/20) the special Senate workgroup you participated in recommended that "*a thorough review of the crisis and Vermont's response to it be done by an **independent entity***" once the crisis is over.

There continues to be an urgent need for a thorough review, especially in the absence of any among the various government agencies involved. Meanwhile, over the past two years, the evidence continues to confirm that interventions such as masks and lockdowns likely cause more harm than good.

Examples of the evidence include the public referendum on masks conducted last fall by the legislature when it asked towns to decide whether or not to implement mask mandates. Citizens came out and explained in thorough detail the harms they and their children were experiencing as a result of prolonged mask use. As a result, most towns chose not to implement mandates. The Department of Health's own survey conducted in the spring of 2020 uncovered evidence of harms caused by masks, especially among people with pre-existing conditions which should have exempted them from their use. However, superintendents and other public officials continued to ignore the harms and have chosen to only focus on compliance.

Also, evidence continues to emerge confirming that lock-downs have little to no benefit (see [Johns-Hopkins recent Meta Analysis](#)), while the harms are immeasurable. At the current time, it is difficult to assess the overall health impacts from the lockdown in Vermont, since the Vermont Department of Health's [Vital statistics reports](#) have not been updated since

2019. It will be interesting to see the results of your committee's review of *Outcomes and Indicators* data from the past two years, since lockdowns are known to increase problems such as drug abuse, suicide, and obesity. It's time we ask: How much benefit, at what cost?

While most of the COVID-19 response measures have been relaxed at the present moment, they may be implemented again at any time. Also, many Vermonters continue to suffer unknown levels of harm due to mask requirements in certain settings. For example, people with health conditions that should qualify them for an exemption under the Governor's original [Mask Mandate](#) are still being required to wear masks in order to access medical services.

In order to conduct a cost/benefit analysis of these measures, we need to have access to the data. An independent entity should be formed immediately to review the available data, its quality and relevance, and assess what more needs to be gathered.

It is time to utilize the scientific method and evaluate the quality of the data objectively. I look forward to working with you on this critical step in the process.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Amy Hornblas
Health Educator