

August 13, 2021

Governor Daniel McKee
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Governor Daniel McKee-

On August 4th 2021, the CDC updated its guidance related to masking in schools. As the incidence of viral spread continues to grow it is important that we pay close attention to recommendations from the experts in infectious disease prevention.

The new guidance from the CDC states, "with COVID-19 cases increasing nationally since mid-June 2021, driven by the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant of SARS-CoV-2, protection against exposure remains essential in school settings. Because of the highly transmissible nature of this variant, along with the extent of mixing of vaccinated and unvaccinated people in schools, the fact that children <12 years of age are not currently eligible for vaccination, and [low levels of vaccination among youth ages 12-17](#), CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all students (age 2 years and older), teachers, staff, and visitors to K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status."

The American Academy of Pediatrics of RI this week issued a statement asking the State of RI to implement a universal masking program for the start of the school year in conjunction with vaccinating all who are eligible.

Here in Rhode Island we have seen a notable increase in COVID-19 transmission.

According to data from the RI Department of Health, since July 3rd:

- the test positive rate has increased from 0.4% to 3.3%,
- the community transmission has risen from 12/100,000 to 140/100,000 (high transmission)
- Hospitalizations have risen from 18 to 79, (up from 40 patients earlier this week).

Additionally, according to data from the RI Department of Health the current rate of infection in school age children is above the 100/100,000 indicating High Transmission:

- Children 5-9 years 147/100,000
- Children 10-14 years 158/100,000
- Children 15-18 years 138/100,000

One of the best ways to minimize the spread of the virus and the development of new variants is to take the precautions we have available to us such as vaccinations for those who are able to be vaccinated and wearing facial coverings. Wearing a mask protects you and the people around you, but they work best when everyone wears one. It is one of the easiest ways we have to slow the spread of disease. The decision of whether or not to require masking in schools is of vital importance to the health and well-being of Rhode Islanders. Therefore any actions must be guided by experts in the field of public health and epidemiology and should not be delegated to municipal school departments.

We call upon you, Governor Daniel McKee, to consider this information and to declare an executive order requiring appropriate facial coverings for school students (age 2 years and older), teachers, staff, and visitors to K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status.

Respectfully,

Representative Michelle McGaw, District 71	Representative Liana Cassar, District 66
Representative Deborah Ruggiero, District 74	Representative Jose Batista, District 12
Representative Teresa Tanzi, District 34	Representative John Lombardi, District 8
Representative Rebecca Kislak, District 4	Representative Joshua Giraldo, District 56
Representative Edith Ajello, District 1	Representative Jason Knight, District 67
Representative Lauren Carson, District 75	Representative Leonela Felix, District 61
Representative Terri Cortvriend, District 72	Senator James Seveney, District 11
Representative David Morales, District 7	Senator Alana DiMario, District 36
Representative Susan Donovan, District 69	Senator Kendra Anderson, District 31
Representative Robert Craven, District 32	Senator Tiara Mack, District 6
Representative Brianna Henries, District 64	Senator Jeanine Calkin, District 30
Representative Gregg Amore, District 65	Senator Cynthia Mendes, District 18
Representative Marcia Ranglin-Vassell, District 5	Senator Lou DiPalma, District 12
Representative Kathleen Fogarty, District 35	Senator Joshua Miller, District 28
Representative Karen Alzate, District 60	Senator Bridget Valverde, District 35
Representative June Speakman, District 68	Senator Dawn Euer, District 13
Representative Brandon Potter, District 16	Senator Sam Bell, District 5