



Ohio Children's Hospital Association
Saving, protecting and enhancing children's lives

March 8, 2022

Dear School Superintendents, Administrators and School Board Members:

THANK YOU. We are grateful for everything you have done to keep your students as safe as possible, while also balancing the priority of keeping them in school. You have done an incredible job. We know the critical importance of in-person learning for the cognitive, social, and emotional development of our children, and share your belief that the best place for kids is in school, full-time, in the classroom learning with their peers.

Today, we are writing to share that we have reviewed the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ohio, including the volume and severity of cases among children and our local communities. As of the date of this letter, we believe it is reasonable to recommend that schools can rescind mask requirements in most districts within Ohio. However, as always, we encourage districts to work closely with county health departments and rely on the guidance provided at the local level as the pandemic continues to evolve. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released a new framework for the pandemic, which recommends schools and early childcare settings now follow the same masking guidelines for the community in which they are located. You can find your community's risk level, updated on a weekly basis, at the CDC website.

Additionally, it is CRITICAL that schools support students and staff who prefer to wear masks despite rescinding any requirements. School administrators should do all they can to ensure that the decision of these individuals is respected and supported publicly in announcing any new policy related to masking. We urge staff and faculty to be mindful of children who may be immunocompromised or have close relatives at risk.

We continue to stand by our recommendation that vaccination remains the best protection against developing severe illness from COVID-19, for both school-aged children and adults.

As masks are removed, it is important to understand that there could be – and likely will be – an uptick in other respiratory viruses. This is natural and should not be cause for alarm. However, we recommend school districts plan accordingly, as our institutions are doing.

Please note that when and if a surge in COVID-19 cases occurs statewide, we may issue additional guidance to once again recommend masking or other precautions. However, as always, we will do judiciously and only when absolutely necessary.

March 8, 2022
Page 2

Once again, we commend school districts for doing all they can to ensure our state's children are safe while attending school. We stand ready to support these efforts however we can.

Sincerely,



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Hospital



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