

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 2, 2021

Rochelle Walensky, MD, MPH
Director
Center for Disease Control and Prevention
395 E St. SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Director Walensky,

We write to you concerned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) lack of transparency regarding its guidance for COVID-19 transmission mitigation recommendations for K-12 educational settings, including that all school children should be masked regardless of vaccination status.

Children have been dramatically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and they have missed out on key social developmental interactions over the past year.¹ In-person education is essential to supporting children and families, by not only providing education, but also opportunities to engage in activities to support healthy development and access to social, mental, and physical health services, which can reduce stress and mitigate negative outcomes in development. It is critical that we get our children back into the classroom with as few restrictions as possible to support this development.

We are aware that many states are currently experiencing a significant increase in COVID-19 and there are concerns regarding variants of the disease. As Members of Congress, we are concerned by this case increase and support state-led efforts to increase vaccinations and reduce this spread.

However, at a time when schools are set to reopen and children are eager to return to normalcy, the CDC's guidance has reverted to recommending fully vaccinated individuals to wear masks in indoor settings, including all K-12 students. We are concerned about the lack of published data or studies used to justify the necessity of such guidance.

It has been reported that children, and young children in particular, have a very low risk of serious complications from COVID-19.² With vaccinations regularly available, there is no reason any concerned school staff cannot have the protection they need to teach with minimal restrictions in the 2021-2022 school year. The elementary school years in particular are especially crucial for children's social development, and we are concerned about the potential impact of mask wearing on that development. The lack of data on this final point is particularly troubling given there has been more than a year of time to study the issue.

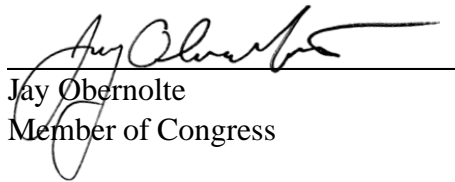
We have been repeatedly told to trust the science regarding how the CDC creates its policies, yet the lack of transparency in how this recommendation was made and the absence of studies to support it is both concerning and extremely frustrating to parents of school-aged children. Therefore, as schools are reopening under strict and tenuously justified mask mandates based on CDC recommendations, we respectfully request answers to these questions:

1. What scientific evidence is the CDC relying on in recommending students to wear masks?
2. Has the CDC identified conclusive data indicating school-aged children's potential as key vector's for transmitting the COVID-19 virus and its variants?

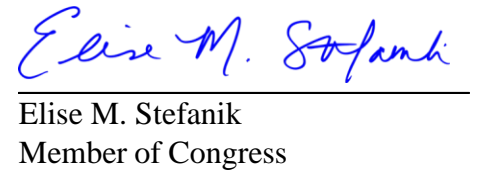
3. What is the risk that vaccinated school staff contract a life-threatening case of COVID-19 when performing their duties absent restrictions?
4. What are the developmental and educational impacts of masks on in-person education for K-12 students? What conclusive studies analyzing these impacts have been conducted or are underway?
5. What metrics will be considered in the future for modifying the current guidance regarding mask wearing by school children?

We thank you for your attention to this request and look forward to your prompt response.

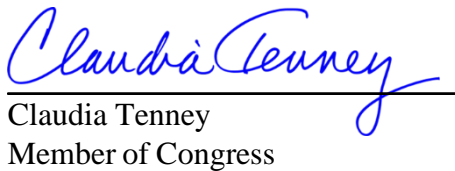
Sincerely,



Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress



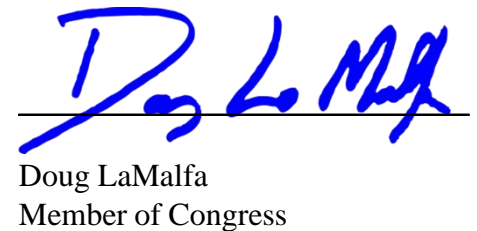
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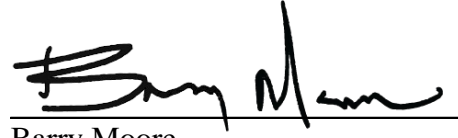
Blake D. Moore
Member of Congress

[1] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7011a1.htm?s_cid=mm77011a1_w

[2] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6949a1.htm>



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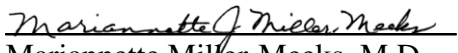
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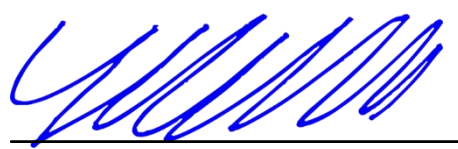
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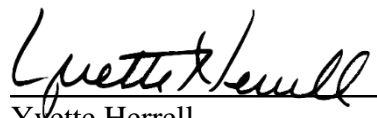
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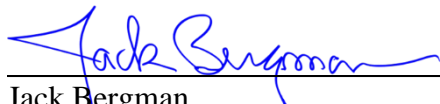
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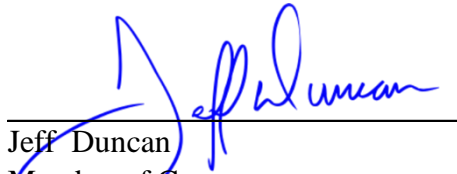
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