

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2022

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Office of the Mayor of Washington DC
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

We are writing to request documentation and information regarding your decision to continue mandating masks in schools within the District of Columbia. The decision to mandate masks in our children's schools is not one that should be made lightly. The effects these masks place on children expands beyond the realm of a public health measure.

Over the last few weeks, we have begun to see a sharp decline in the number of COVID-19 cases in the District of Columbia following the Omicron surge. The number of positive cases per 100,000 people have gone down by over 50% in D.C. and Maryland, and roughly 20% in Virginia. The pattern of exponential growth followed by a return to normal levels in terms of the number of positive Omicron cases has been observed multiple times in several different countries around the world. As of February 17, 2022, D.C. has averaged around 153 new cases every day.¹ This is a decrease of more than 80% since the first week of January.² Therefore, we were pleased to see you consider the facts in your decision to end proof of vaccination and indoor masks beginning on March 1st. However, we remain concerned by your decision to continue mandating masks in our schools.

When making any decision of this magnitude, it is imperative that you take into account how they may negatively impact our children. With this in mind, it is also imperative that we take into account the negative effects these masks have on children. It is widely known that in the first years of speech development, children learn by watching others speak.³ It is common for children to be able to dissect language as being spoken.⁴ In fact, several prominent researchers have speculated that language development among children could be hindered with the loss of facial cues. Additionally, many psychiatrists are worried about the possibility of emotional effects.⁵ The lack of emotional expression could significantly disrupt the implicit feedback that is exchanged between a teacher and student. For example, multiple research studies conducted in both Switzerland and Germany have yielded that it is increasingly difficult for children who are

¹ COVID-19 Integrated County View, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (February 17, 2022).

² Grablick, Colleen, "COVID Cases Falling Rapidly in D.C. Region After Omicron Peak". DCist (January 27, 2022).

³ "How masks could affect speech and language development in children." CBC News (March 17, 2021).

⁴ "The importance of faces for infants' learning". BOLD (October 24, 2018).

⁵ "Masks in class -- how damaging to child development?" France24.

developing social skills to recognize the emotions of their peers when a face is covered.⁶ It is also important to remember that these effects are being researched in normal, healthy children. What could we expect in children who already possess a developmental disorder?

The National Institute of Health released the following statement regarding the matter: “While masks can protect children from COVID-19 infection, it is unclear how mask-wearing behavior and mask mandates influence children’s cognitive and social development.”⁷ Even top health experts in the United States are not able to deny the possibility of negative developmental effects on children as a result of wearing masks. Furthermore, many European countries have taken a different approach and adhered to the advice of the World Health Organization (WHO) rather than following our lead in masking all students. The WHO recommends that children under the age of 5 should not be required to wear masks. As for children between the ages of 6-11, the decision should be made while considering a variety of factors including “the potential impact of wearing a mask on learning and psychosocial development, in consultation with teachers, parents/caregivers and/or medical providers.”⁸

Lastly, the question must be raised as to why students and teachers are forced to continue wearing these masks when customers at bars and restaurants, among other places, no longer have to wear them. The virus is just as likely to spread among adults and children at a restaurant or retail setting as it is in a school. This has made us question whether the logic behind this decision is truly rooted in science or is attributed to political motives. When the well-being of our children is in the equation, these decisions need to be made from an objective point of view that considers both the short- and long-term effects.

To assist in determining the effectiveness of continuing to mandate masks in schools, we ask that you please provide the following information no later than March 7, 2022:

1. Documentation and research leading up to your decision to continue mandating masks in schools;
2. An estimated date we can expect to have the mandates lifted for children;
3. Any research you may possess advocating against the negative affects masks have on children;
4. The classification system being used to determine which environments can operate mask free; and
5. Documentation supporting the basis for your decision to institute and later repeal the vaccine pass requirement.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Please contact Congressman Norman’s office at (202) 225-5501 with any follow-up questions or to coordinate sending the requested documentation. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

⁶ Juliane Schneider, MD1; Vania Sandoz, MSc2; Lucile Equey, MD1; et al, “*The Role of Face Masks in the Recognition of Emotions by Preschool Children.*” JAMA Pediatrics (November 15, 2021).

⁷ “*How Does Wearing Masks Affect Children?*” National Institute of Health Mask Guidance (November 8, 2021).

⁸ “*Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Children and Masks*”, World Health Organization.

Sincerely,



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



Brian Babin D.D.S
Member of Congress



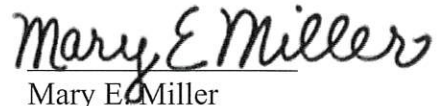
Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



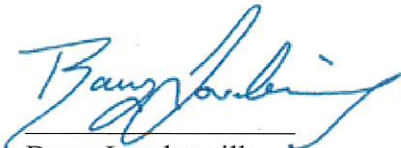
Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



Mary E. Miller
Member of Congress



Barry Loudermilk
Member of Congress



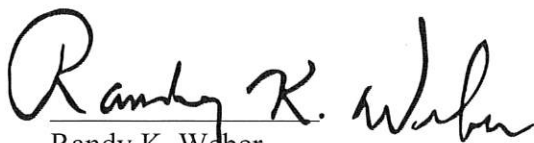
Marjorie Taylor Greene
Member of Congress



Chuck Fleischmann
Member of Congress



Dan Bishop
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress



Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman, Committee on Oversight & Reform