

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-4605

May 20, 2021

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam  
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia  
P.O. Box 1475  
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam,

We write to request that you reconsider the executive order requiring mask wearing in K-12 schools across the Commonwealth of Virginia, even extending to the fall.

Your May 14 executive order largely lifted the mask mandate across the commonwealth but maintained that students and teachers are still required to wear masks on school property. Although the low vaccination rates among children may form the foundation for this policy, we ask that you consider other important facts.

Research has consistently shown that children are at low risk for contracting COVID-19, or having severe case if they do become infected with the virus.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, schools have not been considered a significant contributor to community transmission.<sup>2</sup> Studies show that staff-to-staff transmission is more common than student to staff, staff to student, or student to student.<sup>3</sup>

Virginia schools can still mitigate the spread of COVID-19 without masking children. Teachers, and children ages 12-18, are able to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if they so choose. Promoting handwashing and regular cleanliness will remain vital—as they always have in school settings—to ensure that any sort of disease does not spread.

Parents should once again be given autonomy over their child's educational experience. Parents know that children are at low risk for catching COVID-19. Parents know that wearing masks can be harmful to children's development and emotional wellbeing. Decisions about our schools should come from parents, not government mandates.

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<sup>1</sup> Petra Zimmermann, Nigel Curtis, *Why is COVID-19 less severe in children? A review of the proposed mechanisms underlying the age-related difference in severity of SARS-CoV-2 infections*, Archives of disease in childhood, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33262177/>

<sup>2</sup> Margaret A. Honein, PhD, Lisa C. Barrios, Dr.PH, John T. Brooks, MD, *Data and Policy to Guide Opening Schools Safely to Limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2 Infection*, Journal of American Medical Association, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2775875>

<sup>3</sup> J Ehrhardt, et. al., *Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in children aged 0 to 19 years in childcare facilities and schools after their reopening in May 2020, Baden-Wurtemberg, Germany*, Euro surveillance, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7502898/>

Over the past 14 months, our state and our country have made tremendous progress fighting this virus. Sadly, many misguided policies came at the expense of our liberties. It is past time to defend the freedom of each Virginian to choose whether or not to wear a mask.

Thank you for taking our thoughts, and the thoughts of our constituents, into consideration. We hope you reconsider your guidance and stop masking our children.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Bob Good in blue ink.

Congressman Bob Good (VA-05)

Handwritten signature of Robert J. Wittman in blue ink.

Congressman Robert J. Wittman (VA-01)

Handwritten signature of H. Morgan Griffith in blue ink.

Congressman H. Morgan Griffith (VA-09)

Handwritten signature of Ben Cline in blue ink.

Congressman Ben Cline (VA-06)