



December 24, 2021

The Honorable Dennis R. Schrader  
Secretary of Health Maryland Department of Health  
Herbert R. O'Connor State Office Building  
201 West Preston Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201 – 2399

Re: Mask Mandate / Guidance

Dear Secretary Schrader,

Thank you for all your hard work and dedication during the pandemic. In light of the current surge in cases, we believe it is time to consider changing the policy on masking.

As you are aware, Governor Hogan's Reopening Maryland plan lifted the mask requirement due to a review of the numbers, facts, and vaccination rates at that time. "Effective July 1, masks or face coverings will not be required in any setting, including schools, camps, and childcare facilities. However, private businesses and workplaces are free to put in place their own policies or guidance. Local jurisdictions are free to use their own emergency powers on these matters."

Now, we support and strongly encourage an evidence-based review of the current changing situation. As previously curtailed activities increase, it seems important to try all measures to minimize the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on our community.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention "recommends wearing face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission." Furthermore, the CDC requires masks on public transportation. Given the rising infection numbers and the low vaccination rates in some jurisdictions, it seems prudent to reconsider the lifting of that mandate.

We would urge your COVID task force to review the rapidly changing recent data and consider returning to science-based requirements for masking.

We, like all Marylanders, are frustrated with the length of the pandemic and we realize many people do not wish to mask. However, according to the CDC website: "We now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms ("asymptomatic") and that even those who eventually develop symptoms ("pre-symptomatic") can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus spreads between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing— even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms."

The science we have on masking has been hard earned by human lives. Given the current numbers, it seems wise to consider taking urgent action.

Sincerely,



Dr. Loralie Ma, MD  
President, MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society



Bob Atlas  
President & CEO, Maryland Hospital Association



Matt Celentano  
Executive Director, The League of Life & Health Insurers of Maryland, Inc.



Joe DeMattos, Jr., MA  
President and CEO, Health Facilities Association of Maryland



Kevin D. Heffner, MAGS  
President, LifeSpan Network