

August 23, 2021

Director Rochelle Walensky
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Administrator David Pekoske
Transportation Security Administration
6595 Springfield Center Drive
Springfield, VA 22150

Dear Director Walensky and Administrator Pekoske:

We, the undersigned organizations representing clinicians, public health, scientists and patients, thank you for maintaining the requirement that all individuals wear masks on public transportation and encourage you to keep this policy in place until low transmission rates in addition to increased vaccination rates make it safe to lift. We greatly appreciate the August 17, 2021 announcement that the mask requirement has been extended through January 18, 2022.

Compelling evidence¹ has demonstrated that mask wearing is effective at preventing transmission of COVID-19. Diverse populations co-mingle on public transportation, including children too young to be vaccinated, older adults and individuals who are immunocompromised. In addition, communities of color, who have been hardest hit by the pandemic, are more likely to live in densely populated metro areas and depend on public transportation to go to work, seek healthcare and buy groceries, increasing the risk of exposure to the virus². People are often in close proximity and unable to practice physical distancing for prolonged periods in public transportation settings. Universal mask wearing in these settings is an important strategy to stop the spread of infections and allow people to continue traveling safely.

High or substantial transmission rates in most of the country coupled with the significantly increased transmissibility of the Delta variant greatly increase individuals' risk of exposure to COVID-19. During this high-risk time, a combination of multiple prevention strategies (vaccination, mask wearing, physical distancing, hand hygiene, etc.) is critical to prevent infections, hospitalizations and deaths. Requiring masks on public transportation will continue to be an important component of this strategy.

Thank you for your commitment to leading with science and for your tireless work to overcome this pandemic, including by increasing vaccination rates and mask wearing.

Sincerely,

AIDS Action Baltimore

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

American Academy of Family Physicians

¹ <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/4/e2014564118>

² [Who relies on public transit in the U.S. | Pew Research Center](#)

American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Association of Clinical Endocrinology
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Physicians
American College of Radiology
American College of Surgeons
American Epilepsy Society
American Physical Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Public Health Association
American Sexual Health Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene
American Thoracic Society
American Urological Association
Association for Clinical Oncology
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Big Cities Health Coalition
Common Threads

Council of Medical Specialty Societies
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Endocrine Society
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security
Labor of Love Safety Training and Consulting
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Network of Public Health Institutes
North Carolina AIDS Action Network
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Hospital Medicine
Society of Interventional Radiology
The Gerontological Society of America
Thrive at Life: Working Solutions
Treatment Action Group
Trust for America's Health