

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM  
2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
MINORITY (202) 225-5074  
<https://oversight.house.gov>

February 24, 2022

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Mayor of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW #406  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

On January 10, 2022, Committee Republicans wrote to you requesting you withdraw the vaccine mandate you implemented for the District of Columbia.<sup>1</sup> Last week—the day before the next phase of the vaccine mandate went into effect—you announced the vaccine mandate would not continue. Additionally, next month, masks will no longer be required for many businesses. However, you are continuing to require masks in “schools, childcare facilities, and libraries.”<sup>2</sup> This is unfair and unhealthy for children. Children are least likely to be harmed by COVID-19 and the most vulnerable to the consequences of masking and other extreme COVID mitigation policies.<sup>3</sup> Committee Republicans urge you to abandon these failed policies and allow children to enter their schools, daycares, and libraries without masks.

According to the February 14 Coronavirus Situational Update, “the District’s indoor mask requirements will be dialed back on March 1, 2022.”<sup>4</sup> Beginning on March 1, people without masks will be permitted to enter restaurants, bars, sports venues, and gyms.<sup>5</sup> The District’s change in policy will allow people to finally enjoy their national capital after two years of COVID-19 restrictions. This new policy is a step in the right direction but leaves behind children—the least likely to be harmed by the virus but the most harmed by mask-wearing.<sup>6</sup> While Democrat-controlled states around the country, including New Jersey, Oregon, and Connecticut, are repealing ineffective mask mandates for children, only the country’s most out-of-touch leaders appear determined to double down on this failed policy.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Comm. on Oversight and Reform Republicans to Hon. Muriel Bowser, Mayor, District of Columbia (Jan. 10, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Chelsea Cirruzzo, Cuneyt Dil, *D.C. to drop indoor mask and vaccine mandate*, AXIOS (Feb. 14, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Anya Kamenetz, *After 2 years, growing calls to take masks off children in school*, NPR (Jan. 28, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> *Coronavirus Situational Update*, D.C. Mayor’s Office, Feb. 14, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Marty Makary & H. Cody Meissner, *The Case Against Masks for Children*, THE WALL ST. J. (Aug. 8, 2021).

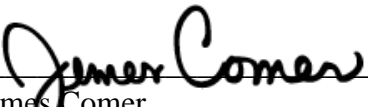
<sup>7</sup> Susannah Luthi and Victoria Colliver, *Newsom wants to end school masks, but teachers say not yet*, POLITICO (Feb. 13, 2022).

It is unclear why D.C. children will continue to be subjected to policies that have failed to reduce transmission but pose risks to children’s speech, social development, and education. The repercussions of masking children for two years are just beginning to be understood, but numerous scientific papers indicate “[m]asks can interfere with young children’s brain development.”<sup>8</sup> As the *Atlantic* described last year, after scientists and doctors “reviewed a variety of studies—some conducted by the CDC itself, some cited by the CDC as evidence of masking effectiveness in a school setting, and others touted by media to the same end—to try to find evidence that would justify the CDC’s no-end-in-sight mask guidance for the very-low-risk pediatric population, particularly post-vaccination...[they] came up empty-handed.”<sup>9</sup> A study published last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine* revealed that in Sweden—which kept preschools and schools open without encouraging masking—of the almost two million children studied, there were zero deaths attributed to COVID-19.<sup>10</sup> To this day, there is no credible randomized study to demonstrate the efficacy of masking children. There is zero benefit to their health or well-being.

Moreover, there seems to be no logic behind the District’s COVID-19 policies. It makes no sense for adults to patronize bars or watch sporting events without masks while children are required to go to school with them. The District should immediately do away with requiring masks for children in school and allow them to return to normal. To better understand the District’s continued masking of children, please provide a briefing to the Committee no later than March 3, 2022.

To arrange the briefing or ask any questions about this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform has primary legislative jurisdiction over “[m]unicipal affairs of the District of Columbia in general” pursuant to House Rule X. Additionally, the Committee is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” also under House Rule X.

Sincerely,

  
James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

  
Jody Hice  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Government  
Operations

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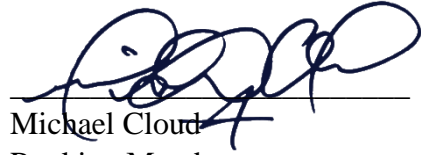
<sup>8</sup> *Supra*, n. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Margery Smelkinson, Leslie Bienen, and Jeanne Noble, *The Case Against Masks at School*, THE ATLANTIC (Jan. 26, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Jonas F. Ludvigsson, et al., *Open Schools, Covid-19, and Child and Teacher Morbidity in Sweden*, NEW ENG. J. MED. (Feb. 18, 2021).



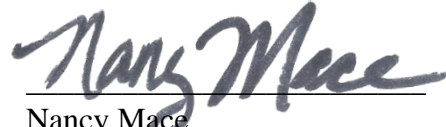
Glenn S. Grothman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security



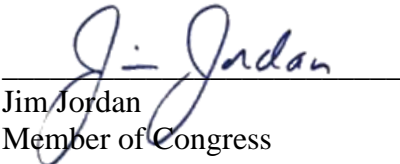
Michael Cloud  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Economic and  
Consumer Policy



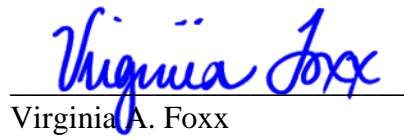
Ralph Norman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Environment



Nancy Mace  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and  
Civil Liberties



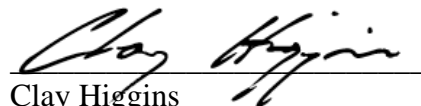
Jim Jordan  
Member of Congress



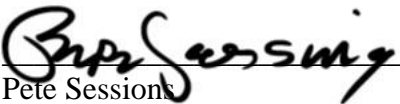
Virginia A. Foxx  
Member of Congress



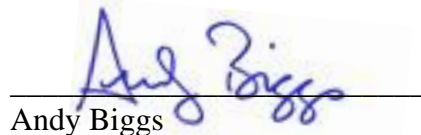
Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins  
Member of Congress



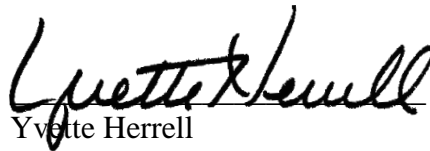
Pete Sessions  
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs  
Member of Congress



Andrew S. Clyde  
Member of Congress



Yvette Herrell  
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress

The Honorable Muriel Bowser

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cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Environment

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties