

Dear Illinois State Superintendent Dr. Ayala and members of the Illinois State Board of Education,

We applaud your current school reopening guidelines requiring universal masking at all times for anyone inside the school building. This mirrors what we do in clinical care to keep patients and healthcare workers safe.

A group calling themselves [Million Unmasked March](#) is staging a protest in Springfield, IL, on July 25th, 2020. They are speaking out in opposition to 1) universal masking in schools and 2) COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

We are aware that Million Unmasked has been approaching Illinois lawmakers asking for support, and they claim to have 6000+ supporters.

As physicians, healthcare workers, parents, and citizens, we strongly disagree with their opinions on masking and vaccination.

Universal masking in schools is critical to keeping students, teachers, and staff safe. As you are aware, it is a cornerstone of the containment strategies we have available to reduce viral transmission: Masking, distancing, hygiene. An international group of over 100 medical scientists endorsed [universal public masking](#) to stop the spread of COVID-19 after modeling masking's effect on transmission rates; these models are based on an interdisciplinary review of all scientific evidence since the emergence of the novel coronavirus. Universal masking is endorsed by the [Council of Medical Specialty Societies](#), which represents more than 800,000 doctors from 45 specialties. The American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, and the American Nurses Association also issued a joint [statement](#) urging the public to observe universal masking. Additionally, more than 5000 concerned health care workers and citizens have signed [IMPACT's petition](#) calling for a federal mandate for masks in public.

Vaccination relies on herd immunity; vaccination exemptions will threaten the ability to achieve herd immunity and will undermine the safety of all children, teachers, and staff.

PLEASE go forward with universal masking in schools to support the health and safety of Illinois' children, teachers, and education workers. In addition to saving lives, universal masking in schools is critical to keeping our schools open, which greatly affects whether we can continue to reopen businesses and pursue economic recovery. Universal masking in schools is not just about students and teachers; it's about the welfare of our entire state. Our common enemy is COVID-19, and we are all in this together.

Sincerely,

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