

Gobernador Northam anuncia el Decreto de salud Pública que requiere el uso Universal de mascarilla en los colegios

Order reinforces state law SB 1303

RICHMOND—Governor Northam today announced a Public Health Emergency Order requiring universal masking in all indoor settings in Virginia’s K-12 schools. This order reinforces current state law, which requires Virginia schools adhere to mitigation strategies outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As of July 28, CDC guidelines include universal masking for all students, teachers, and staff. SB 1303 was passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of the General Assembly earlier this year.

“We all share the same goal of keeping our schools open and keeping our students safe,” said Governor Northam. “That’s why the General Assembly passed this law with overwhelming bipartisan support. This Public Health Order makes it very clear that masks are required in all indoor K-12 settings, and Virginia expects all schools to comply. I’m grateful to the work of the

General Assembly and the Health Department, and I look forward to a safe start to the school year.”

73 percent of all adults in Virginia have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. As of August 10, 40.3 percent of 12-15 year-olds in Virginia and 51.7 percent of 16-17 year olds in Virginia are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Children under 12 are not yet eligible to receive any available vaccination, which is one reason CDC updated its guidance to recommend universal masking in all K-12 schools. Masks are a proven tool to reduce in-school transmission, even in communities with high levels of spread.

“We know that masking is an effective tool to prevent the spread of COVID-19, particularly among children who are not yet eligible for vaccination,” said Virginia Health Commissioner Dr. Norm Oliver. “As cases rise in our communities, universal masking and other mitigation measures will ensure our schools continue to be the safest place for

Virginia’s children.”

“The vast majority of school districts have chosen to follow the CDC and keep their school communities safe,” said State Superintendent Dr. James Lane. “Universal masking has worked in school settings across Virginia for the past year and a half, and it remains a critical part of our safety protocols. I’m grateful to Governor Northam and Dr. Oliver for this order, which will ensure uniformity across all school districts and keep students safely in their classrooms—no matter where they live in Virginia.”

In addition to this Public Health Order, Governor Northam has dedicated significant resources to improve the safety of K-12 schools. On Tuesday, Governor Northam signed House Bill 7001, which provides a total of \$500 million to improve ventilation and air quality in public schools. Ventilation systems clean and disperse air, decreasing the risk of various airborne illnesses including COVID-19.



Governor Northam

In 2020, Governor Northam directed \$492 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to public schools and PreK-12 state-level education initiatives. This year, Virginia received approximately \$939 million in ESSER II funds under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act of 2021. Additionally, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds directly allocate \$1.9 billion to school divisions, with an additional state set aside of \$211 million.