

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 evidence<sup>1</sup> 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 virus<sup>2</sup>. 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

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

<sup>2</sup> [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