

TO: Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax County School Boards and Superintendents

FROM: Arlington County School Health Advisory Board (SHAB)  
Fairfax County School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC)  
Alexandria City Public Schools Medical Consultant

DATE: January 31, 2022

RE: Support for Continued COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies, Including Universal Masking

The Arlington Public Schools School Health Advisory Board ([APS SHAB](#)), the School Health Advisory Committee of the Fairfax County School Board ([FCPS SHAC](#)), and the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) Medical Consultant strongly recommend the continued use of universal masking in our public schools as part of a robust effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 variants and keep our schools open.

We echo the perspective of the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Northern Virginia Health Directors in asking that the School Boards continue following the most up-to-date Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, which recommend mask wearing in schools.

The CDC “recommends universal indoor masking by all students, staff, teachers, and visitors to K – 12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.” The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) also supports universal masking, noting that “face masks can be safely worn by all children 2 years of age and older, including the vast majority of children with underlying health conditions, with rare exception.”

We support and encourage your commitment to maintaining vital in-person instruction and we oppose any reduction in mitigation measures during this period of high community disease transmission.

The current Omicron variant surge is driving teacher, staff, bus driver, and student absenteeism, threatening the medically vulnerable in our community, and straining our health care and community resources. We believe limiting transmission through a multi-layered mitigation strategy, which includes mandatory masking of students and staff, will enable our schools to stay open, 5 days per week, until the current crisis subsides.

We appreciate your leadership in keeping schools safe for in-person learning, and we look forward to our continued partnership to safeguard the health, safety, and wellbeing of our children and communities.