



Washington State Legislature

February 9, 2022

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Re: Mask mandates

Dear Governor Inslee:

States across our nation, including ones led by Democratic governors, are ending mask mandates and other COVID-related restrictions. California and Oregon, members of your Western States Pact, have announced dates to end their mask mandates – providing certainty to their residents. We applaud the actions of these governors.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal released a statement that said, in part: *“As part of the transition from pandemic to endemic, I believe it is safe and timely to eliminate the statewide masking requirement for students and allow for a decision by local health officials.”* We agree with Superintendent Reykdal that it is time to eliminate the statewide masking requirement for students.

In a Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee work session on January 12, Dr. Chris Murray, chair of Health Metrics Sciences at the University of Washington, said the best strategy is to change our mindset to managing an endemic disease and move out of the pandemic mode. We support Dr. Murray’s conclusion.

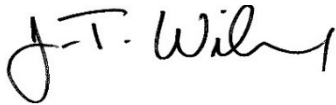
In your news conference, you said you were encouraged by recent trends in the data and believe there will continue to be a steep decline in the numbers in the weeks ahead. We, too, are encouraged.

What we have concerns with is your reluctance to tell Washingtonians when you will lift the statewide indoor and school mask mandates. It should not take another week to make this decision. The time is now. Providing this certainty would be uplifting for so many people who have had to endure some of the strictest orders in the nation and make personal sacrifices over the last two years. Ending these mask mandates will alleviate burdens on families, students, schools, and businesses across our state.

Governor, there are Washingtonians who are very content to wear masks and do what they think is best to protect themselves. But there are a huge number of our neighbors who are ready right now to move on to treating this disease as an endemic, and ready for leadership that reflects that reality. It is not just other states quitting their mask mandates; it is science and data saying we have already moved into a new phase with this disease. We ask you to trust the science and end the mandatory state mask mandates.

Let us focus our efforts on protecting the most vulnerable. And let us trust people to protect themselves and their neighbors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.T. Wilcox". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

Representative J.T. Wilcox
House Republican Leader

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Braun". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

Senator John Braun
Senate Republican Leader