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**NC Child Calls for Statewide School Mask Mandate
to Support Safe In-Person Learning as School Resumes**

RALEIGH, NC (August 18, 2021) - In an urgent appeal to elected officials, child advocacy group NC Child urged North Carolina's top officials to implement a statewide requirement for all students, staff, and visitors to wear masks in public schools, so that students may attend school safely, with much less need for quarantines, and fewer school days missed. Advocates urge the mandate until community transmission rates drop to much lower levels, and vaccinations are available and widespread among students at all grade levels.

"NC Child is deeply concerned about the harm to children that would result from another year of school closures and extended quarantines," said NC Child Executive Director, Michelle Hughes. "I know that our state's leaders share this concern – and that's why we are calling on them today to request a statewide school mask mandate *before* over one million of our children return to classrooms."

[The letter](#), sent today to the state's top leaders including Governor Roy Cooper, House Speaker Tim Moore, State Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger, and Superintendent Catherine Truitt, comes as more than one million children across North Carolina head back to school next week. At the same time COVID rates are increasing rapidly in the state. COVID outbreaks have already forced quarantines in some school districts where classes have already begun, leading some local school boards to reverse their mask-optional policies. As recently as this Monday,

Transylvania, Ashe, Davie, and Burke County schools changed their policies to require masks at school.

"Masking is a critical component of safe, in-person learning right now," said Christoph Diasio, MD, Moore county pediatrician and President of the NC Pediatric Society. "As medical experts, we are deeply concerned about the quick-spreading nature of the Delta variant and the increasing hospitalization of children with COVID-19. Masks add an important layer of safety to in-person learning."

Child advocates point to states like Florida, Mississippi, and Texas where school has begun without mask requirements - and accordingly thousands of students have already been quarantined and are missing in-person learning. NC Child wants to remind leaders and parents across that state that these health and education barriers are preventable using the tools we already have - namely masks for everyone, and vaccines for those who are eligible and able to receive them.

Gov. Roy Cooper and state health officials have advocated for school boards to "[reconsider their decisions not to require face masks for the new school year.](#)" Yet as of early this week 50 districts, representing about 1/4 of the state's public school students, still have mask-optional policies in place.

Read NC Child's letter to state officials here: https://ncchild.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/8.18.21_SchoolMask_StatewideLetter.pdf

About NC Child

[NC Child](#) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 2014 working to eliminate the barriers that stand in kids' way. We advance public policies to ensure that every child in North Carolina has the opportunity to thrive - whatever their race, ethnicity, or place of birth.

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