

SENATOR
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SENATOR RAUSCH FILES UNIVERSAL MASKING BILL FOR MA SCHOOLS

Legislation would implement universal masking for early, primary, and secondary education programs for the 2021-2022 school year and promote youth access to COVID-19 immunizations

BOSTON, MA - This afternoon, Senator Becca Rausch filed SD. 2723, *An Act mitigating COVID-19 transmission among children and families*, a bill requiring universal masking among students and staff in all Massachusetts K-12 schools as well as childcare programs licensed under the Department of Early Education and Care. The legislation will also ensure no attendance penalty for students with vaccination appointments during school hours and provide paid time off for parents and caregivers taking students to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

This bill comes on the heels of last week's announcement from the Baker Administration of nonbinding masking recommendations for Massachusetts schools. The guidance contradicts [updated CDC guidance](#) and the American Academy of Pediatrics' [guidance](#) on COVID-19 safety in schools, both of which strongly recommend in-person learning with mandatory mask-wearing indoors and vaccinations for all students, staff, and faculty.

"With less than a month before our children head back to school, this administration chooses to play Russian roulette with the health of Massachusetts students and families," **said Senator Rausch (D-Needham)**. "I have heard from so many parents, school committee members, teachers, and public health experts who are rightly worried, angry, and frustrated in the wake of DESE's weak, unenforceable, and non-binding mask recommendations. This administration fails to follow the science to the detriment of every community in this Commonwealth. I filed this bill to give families and school staff the piece of mind they deserve about protecting their health and safety."

In addition to mandating masks for students aged two and older and staff in Massachusetts early, primary, and secondary education programs, the bill also provides excused absences from school for COVID-19 vaccination appointments, as well as up to six hours of paid leave for any parent or caregiver bringing their child to get immunized against COVID-19.

"It is the job of our government to protect our most vulnerable - which includes our Commonwealth's children," **said Dr. Natalya Davis**, a Quincy pediatrician who [led a sign-on letter](#) last week among medical professionals to mandate universal masking in Massachusetts schools. "Masks are a simple, safe, cheap intervention that saves lives. This is not debatable despite what opposing voices say. With Delta cases rising, masks are crucial to control the spread of COVID-19 while we vaccinate as many eligible individuals as possible."

Today, by unanimous vote, the Massachusetts Teachers Association also [called on Governor Baker](#) to implement a mandatory mask requirement for all students and staff in all programs from pre-K through higher education.

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