

# **Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) Statement on Latest CDC Guidance on Wearing Face Masks in Schools**

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**ILLINOIS** – Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) President Dan Montgomery issued this statement in response to the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Illinois Department of Public Health guidance that updates masking guidelines.

“As a union of educators and school staff who prioritize the well-being of students, the IFT welcomes the CDC’s and IDPH’s newest guidance around universal masking in

schools. We believe this guidance is in the best interest of students, teachers, and staff in order to keep our school buildings open.

“With the Delta variant surging and case numbers in Illinois rising sharply, it is good policy to ensure the greatest possible level of safety for those who learn and work in our schools.

“In addition to mask requirements, we continue to urge all Illinois school districts and institutions of higher education to employ a layered safety approach, which includes physical distancing, regular handwashing, adequate building ventilation, and consistent COVID testing of students and educators. Science tells us that, in combination with masking, these measures go a long way towards helping keep students, staff, and communities safe.

“We know that the pandemic has hit Black and Latinx communities hardest. Many from these communities are essential workers and risked their lives to keep businesses running during the worst of the pandemic. This guidance centers and protects these most vulnerable populations, and we need even more layers of support for their long-term recovery: legislators should extend the eviction moratorium that is set to expire this month, and school districts should collaborate with students, families, and educators to use federal relief funds to provide the wraparound supports and services that will enable students to thrive.

"CDC's recommendation reminds us all that this pandemic is not over. Its harsh impact is still being felt by our students and their families—and will be felt for years to come. We need a comprehensive, layered approach that addresses the immediate safety needs of our students and educators and promotes the holistic recovery of our communities in the long term.”