

Pritzker Still Won't Point To Benchmark To End Mask Mandates

by Greg Bishop

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SPRINGFIELD – The governor still has not given an exact benchmark for when he'll lift the statewide mask mandate.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker had an indoor mask mandate in place for more than a year until he let the order expire in May. He then re-instituted a mask mandate in July for all indoor gatherings. On Monday, he couldn't say what the benchmark would be to lift the mandate.

“We’re watching to make sure that we’re on a good downward trajectory. That’s what we were looking for back in May leading into June, that’s what we’re looking, for now, to possibly make changes,” Pritzker said.

Illinois is one of 12 states and territories in the U.S. with an indoor mask mandate for everyone, regardless of vaccination, according to U.S. News and World Report. The majority of states don't have a mandate, including Illinois' neighbors.

State Rep. Brad Halbrook, R-Shelbyville, said he sees very little compliance in his district.

"I'm just not sure what it says, other than evidently the governor has some information that nobody else has, or very few people have," Halbrook said.

Halbrook said the indoor mandate should be done away with.

For the mandate in schools, U.S. News and World Report shows Illinois is one of 17 states in the country with a universal mask mandate.

The only thing Pritzker can point to for when he'll lift that mandate is whatever comes from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control And Prevention.

When asked about mask mandates, Pritzker Monday said for schools he's following recommendations from the CDC.

"And that's one of the reasons that we have kids who are masked," Pritzker said. "It's important to make sure to keep them safe, it's what scientists here in the United States are recommending and so we're following it."

State Sen. Don DeWitte, R-St. Charles, said such health care decisions should be made on a local level "with officials that are right there in the district dealing with all of the ramifications of this pandemic."

The governor's school mask mandate is being challenged in courts with parents securing temporary restraining orders against school districts barring them from requiring masks without a quarantine order. There are also unresolved challenges to the state's ability to punish schools that don't follow the mandate.