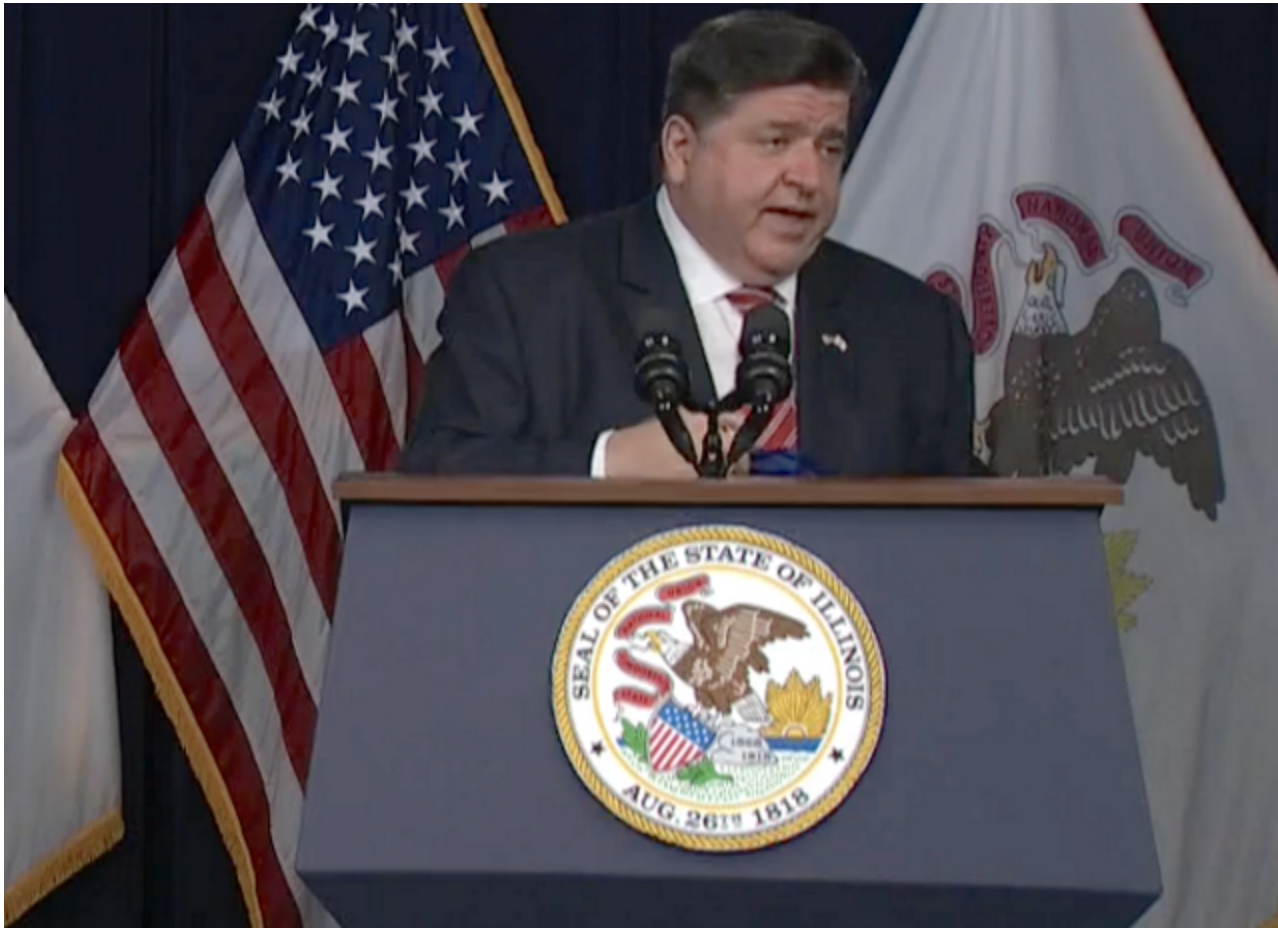


Pritzker Administration Takes Swift Action to Appeal Order Preventing School Safety Measures Amidst Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic

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CHICAGO – Governor Pritzker has asked the Illinois Attorney General’s office for an immediate appeal of Judge Grischow’s decision to restrain the State from enforcing the safety measures aimed at protecting teachers, school personnel, students and communities from COVID-19.

The Attorney General is seeking an expedited appeal from the Fourth District Illinois Appellate Court.

“The grave consequence of this misguided decision is that schools in these districts no longer have sufficient tools to keep students and staff safe while COVID-19 continues to threaten our communities – and this may force schools to go remote,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “This shows yet again that the mask mandate and school exclusion protocols are essential tools to keep schools open and everyone safe. As we have from the beginning of the pandemic, the administration will keep working to ensure every Illinoisan has the tools needed to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.”

“We remain committed to defending Gov. Pritzker’s actions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and will appeal this decision in the Illinois Appellate Court for the 4th District in Springfield,” **said Attorney General Kwame Raoul**. “This decision sends the message that all students do not have the same right to safely access schools and classrooms in Illinois, particularly if they have disabilities or other health concerns. The court’s misguided decision is wrong on the law, demonstrates a misunderstanding of Illinois emergency injunction proceedings and has no relation to the record that was before the court. It prioritizes a relatively small group of plaintiffs who refuse to follow widely-accepted science over the rights of other students, faculty and staff to enter schools without the fear of contracting a virus that has claimed the lives of more than 31,000 Illinois residents – or taking that virus home to their loved ones.”

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pritzker administration has implemented mitigations and programming to protect the health and safety of students, teachers, and staff in schools. To facilitate safe in-person learning, the administration has provided schools across the state with 3.8 million masks for students, teachers, and staff as of January 12th. The State has completed over 2 million COVID-19 tests in schools through the SHIELD program and sent more than a million rapid tests into schools outside of the City of Chicago. Recently, the State provided 350,000 rapid tests to Chicago Public Schools to facilitate a return to in person learning.

To increase access to the lifesaving COVID-19 vaccination, the State has held 1,767 on-site vaccination clinics in schools and day camps with an additional 470 clinics already scheduled. Vaccinations, boosters, mask-wearing and testing are the key to keeping schools open and to maintaining safety standards for staff and students alike.

