

AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana
P.O. Box 83580
Baton Rouge, LA 70884



July 30, 2021

Honorable John Bel Edwards
State of Louisiana
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

I write to you today to urge you to reinstate immediately a statewide mask mandate in response to the recent surge in COVID cases and hospitalizations.

Louisiana's insufficient vaccination rate coupled with the dominant Delta variant has put hospitals and health care providers under severe pressure. Many hospitals already have begun limiting the scheduling of elective procedures, which impacts the long-term health outcomes of Healthy Louisiana program enrollees.

As we know from our experience in Louisiana as well as widely-document research, masking is an effective and minimally disruptive mitigation measure that can help keep our economy open and prevent the further spread of COVID, particularly the highly transmissible Delta Variant.

Our mission is to help members get care, stay well, and build healthy communities. We believe a statewide mask mandate would support that mission by helping to protect Louisianans and to sustain the ability of hospitals and health care providers to serve our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Viator", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kyle C. Viator
Market President
AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana



Achieve with us.

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Dear Governor Edwards,

**Affiliated Chapters of
The Arc of Louisiana**

Arc of Greater New Orleans

ARCO - Monroe

Arc of St. Charles

Beauregard Arc

Donaldsonville Area Arc

LARC - Lafayette

Livingston Arc

St. James Arc

St. John Arc

TARC - Hammond

TARC - Terrebonne

The Arc of Acadiana

The Arc Baton Rouge

The Arc Caddo-Bossier

The Arc of East Ascension

The Arc of Iberville

The Arc of Livingston

The Arc of Morehouse

The Arc Rapides

The Arc of Sabine

The Arc of St. Martin

The Arc of St. Mary

The Arc of Vermillion

On behalf of The Arc of Louisiana and our local chapters across the state, I would like you to consider keeping our essential organizations and facilities open and available to Louisiana's most vulnerable population.

The Arc of Louisiana is a grassroots organization of and for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. The Arc began 67 years ago when families banded together to create programs for their children with disabilities. Our mission is to advocate for individuals with disabilities so that they may live, work and play in the communities of their choosing. We act as a resource and provide education and training to advocates, families, professionals, and individuals with disabilities.

Our local chapters across the state serves more than 8,000 people with disabilities and their families. These services begin as early as birth and continues through their lifespan. In most cases, if we were not able to serve these individuals, families would not able to go to work themselves.

The last 17 months have been difficult for all of Louisiana residents, but especially for the families we serve. During the pandemic we were mandated to close our facility-based programs that serve individuals with developmental disabilities. In most cases, these individuals are not able to be left alone and required supervision. This meant that families were not be able to go to work and provide for their families, and provider agencies were mandated to close programs that employ thousands of Louisianans.

The forced closure of these facilities and programs not only caused hardship for the families they served, but it caused permanent closure of one of our local chapters. This was common across organizations like The Arc across Louisiana. In effort to continue to provide services to this population, we will not be able to sustain another mandated closure.

We ask that instead of mandating closure of businesses, you allow organizations like The Arc to remain open and mandate that they continue the stringent safety protocols that were in place when we started to reopen this year, which allow us to be able to provide high quality needed services in a safe manner. We appreciate your consideration of this request and your continued effort to keep Louisianans safe.

Sincerely,

Kelly Monroe
Executive Director
The Arc of Louisiana



Baton Rouge General

July 29, 2021

Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

Given the low vaccination rates, quintupling of our COVID ICU volume to capacity, and difficulties staffing our ICUs and Emergency Rooms, Baton Rouge General Medical Center is in full support of an indoor mask mandate.

Sincerely,

Edgardo Tenreiro
President and Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Dr. Courtney Phillips, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health

An affiliate of Tulane University School of Medicine



Baton Rouge General Medical Center • BRGeneral.org

Mid City: 3600 Florida Boulevard (70806) • PO Box 2511 (70821-2511) • Baton Rouge, Louisiana • 225-387-7000
Bluebonnet: 8585 Picardy Avenue (70809) • PO Box 2511 (70821-2511) • Baton Rouge, Louisiana • 225-763-4000



August 2, 2021

Gov. John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
900 North 3rd Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Re: Statewide Mask Mandate

Dear Governor Edwards,

I write on behalf of the **Coalition of Louisiana Addiction Service & Prevention Providers (CLASPP)** to support the reinstatement of a statewide mask mandate under your authority as Governor. As Louisiana enters a fourth wave of COVID-19 infections amid the increasing spread of the Delta variant, our association of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment provider agencies from across the state firmly supports prompt risk mitigation measures to impede the spread of the virus in our communities.

State Health Officer Dr. Joseph Kanter has pointed out that six months of progress in combatting the virus have been erased and Louisiana is now the #1 hotspot in the country. The same may be true of our efforts to combat the opioid epidemic under the additional strain of COVID-19, as overdoses continue to rise and providers deal with increasing community need, workforce shortages, low morale, and enhanced infection control protocols.

In the past, the most impactful mitigation measure put in place was a statewide mask mandate, as shown from our state's own data and experience. The positive impact of universal masking has been widely documented. Without swift action regarding masking, our communities risk plunging into further hardship, and the trauma and addiction associated with this pandemic may be much more difficult to address. Thus, we respectfully request and support use of your executive authority to impose this measure immediately.

Despite persistent opposition you have faced, CLASPP applauds the leadership you have shown throughout this pandemic. We always aim to be helpful and supportive, and ask that you lean on CLASPP as a resource in helping advancing policy objectives that support recovery. Thank you kindly.

Sincerely,

William M. Martyn, President
Coalition of Louisiana Addiction Service & Prevention Providers

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
PRESIDENT WILLIAM "MIKE" MARTYN – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESPONSIBILITY HOUSE
VICE PRESIDENT ELSE PEDERSEN – CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, BRIDGE HOUSE GRACE HOUSE
SECRETARY/TREASURER EDWARD CARLSON – CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ODYSSEY HOUSE LOUISIANA
MEMBER-AT-LARGE TODD HAMILTON – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, O'BRIEN HOUSE



FRANCISCAN
MISSIONARIES
OF OUR LADY
HEALTH SYSTEM

July 29, 2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor
State of Louisiana

Dear Governor Edwards:

After weathering 18 months of a novel viral pandemic that has to-date resulted in 10,968 lives lost in Louisiana, 611,974 lives lost in the U.S., and 4,193,942 lives lost around the globe, as caregivers it is unimaginable that we are again reaching a level of panic in our hospitals, ERs, and even clinic sites because of the overwhelming infectivity of the COVID-19 delta variant. The unimaginable, however, is today's reality.

The demands on our hospitals, emergency rooms, ICUs and staff have accelerated so quickly we are approaching hospital bed capacity in all of our health system hospitals. Models project that we are still three months away from the peak of cases in this Delta variant surge.

Because Louisiana's vaccination rates continue to lag other states despite recent increases in vaccination, we *must* have other measures to assist in slowing transmission and decreasing the number of cases. The best means to accomplishing this remain mandatory masks in all indoor places, frequent handwashing, and limited numbers at indoor gatherings. All of these have been proven effective before and are now necessary to assist us and Louisiana over the next three months and possibly beyond. Only with these additional measures while we continue vaccines can we weather this explosive curve and protect the essential care delivery infrastructure for the communities and all patients needing care.

We truly believe there's never been a more important time in our history to demonstrate our responsibility to each other and all those we serve. On behalf of our entire organization and those who serve within it, we are grateful for your support of our work. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to everyone in Louisiana.

We continue to pray for one another and an end to the devastating impact of this virus.

Sincerely,

Richard R. Vath, M.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer



July 29, 2021

Honorable Governor John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Subject: Statewide Mask Mandate Request

Dear Governor Edwards,

As we find ourselves in the fourth COVID-19 wave, every day we appear to be breaking another record in Louisiana. In fact, just this week the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) announced the second highest single-day COVID-19 case count reported since January 2021, as well as the largest single-day increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations since March 2020. Unfortunately, our six months of progress is at risk as our state is now the number one hotspot in the country.

In previous COVID-19 waves, we were able to overcome surges through various mitigation measures, including the statewide mask mandate that was put in place. The positive impact of widespread masking has been well documented, and we have seen the success of this measure in our own data and from our own experience.

With the Delta variant being far more transmissible than previous iterations of the virus, more people are experiencing severe outcomes, and we are consistently seeing hospitalizations among all age groups, including children. In other states that were Delta variant hotspots prior to Louisiana, hospitals are reporting record-high numbers of children hospitalized with COVID-19.

We believe that a universal mask mandate is the least disruptive mitigation measure that can be put in place. It would allow us to safely keep our economy open, and would ultimately minimize negative COVID-19 outcomes in Louisiana.

We respectfully request you put a statewide mask mandate in place immediately. We appreciate your continued leadership and are here to support your directive.

Sincerely,

C. Valentine-Theard, MD, MBA
President, Healthy Blue

Main Campus
2315 East Main Street P. O. Box 13338
New Iberia, LA 70562-3338
phone: 337.364.0441

North Campus
600 North Lewis Street
New Iberia, LA 70583



Dear Governor Edwards:

We are here, we are in our fourth COVID-19 wave and with every passing day we appear to be breaking another record. Earlier this week, the Louisiana Department of Health announced the second highest single-day COVID-19 case count reported since January 6, 2021. That same day, LDH also reported the largest single-day increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations since March 2020.

As Dr. Joseph Kanter, State Health Officer, has pointed out, we have erased six months of progress and Louisiana is now the #1 hotspot in the country.

Iberia Medical Center and other local hospitals are already near capacity and many are limiting elective surgery procedures regarding an inpatient stay. We must protect our hospitals' ability to serve our communities.

The way we got out of those previous surges was through mitigation measures, the most impactful being the mask mandate you put in place. The positive impact of universal masking has been widely documented, but we can also see it in our own data, from our own experience in Louisiana.

The Delta variant is not last year's virus, and it's not just that it's far more transmissible. People may have the impression only older people are experiencing severe outcomes, but we are consistently seeing hospitalizations among much younger age groups.

A mask mandate that is inclusive of K-12 is the least disruptive mitigation measure we can put in place - it is how we keep our economy open and our children in schools...some of which start next week. And it is how we will limit suffering and death in Louisiana. We request you put this measure in place immediately.

We appreciate your continued leadership and stand ready to support.

Thank you,

Dionne Viator, CPA, CGMA, FACHE
President & CEO



500 Rue de la Vie, Suite 405
Baton Rouge, LA 70817
p: 225.928.2555
f: 225.929.9685
www.infamedics.com

7/30/2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor of Louisiana

Dear Governor Edwards:

On behalf of Infamedics, we support your efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our group provides NICU coverage for all of the birthing hospitals in Baton Rouge. As neonatologists, we are supportive of all efforts that may reduce the spread of coronavirus to infants and children, as well as the adult members of the family. We agree with following the CDC recommendations of wearing masks while indoors regardless of vaccination status.

Thank you for being proactive for Louisiana on this matter.

Sincerely,

Steven B. Spedale, MD FAAP
President, Infamedics



I. Steven Udvarhelyi, M.D. | President and Chief Executive Officer

July 29, 2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
Post Office Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

Regrettably, we find ourselves in our fourth COVID-19 wave, one that appears will eclipse the prior three waves in terms of rates of infection and hospitalizations. Earlier this week, the Louisiana Department of Health announced the second highest single-day COVID-19 case count reported since January 6, 2021. That same day, LDH also reported the largest single-day increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations since March 2020.

As you know, we have worked closely with the Louisiana Department of Health throughout the pandemic, helping with data and analytics. Based on the data we have seen, and the predictive models we have run on this recent surge, we are deeply worried that it will become more severe than the prior surges. Accordingly, we are concerned about the impact it will have on the state if we don't take decisive action now to mitigate the spread of the Delta variant. Our hospitals, physicians, nurses and other healthcare providers are under severe pressure, and their capacity is being strained. Several providers have halted elective procedures. We must protect the ability of hospitals and healthcare providers to not just treat patients with COVID-19, but to serve the healthcare needs of our communities.

The Delta variant is not last year's virus, and it's not just that it's far more transmissible. People may have the impression only older people are experiencing severe outcomes, but we are consistently seeing hospitalizations among all age groups, including children. In Arkansas, another Delta variant-fueled hotspot that began its most recent surge before Louisiana, hospitals are reporting record-high numbers of children hospitalized with COVID-19. And while we are seeing an increase in breakthrough infections among vaccinated people as well, vaccination continues to provide the greatest protection available. Unfortunately, many people in Louisiana refuse to get vaccinated, so other measures are required.

We have had COVID-19 surges three times already, and the way we got out of those previous surges was through mitigation measures, the most impactful being the mask mandate you put in place. The positive impact of universal masking has been widely documented, but we can also see it in our own data, from our own experience in Louisiana.

www.bcbsla.com

5525 Reitz Avenue | Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809

Steven.Udvarhelyi@bcbsla.com | (225) 295-2548 | Fax (225) 295-2506

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and is incorporated as Louisiana Health Service & Indemnity Company

A mask mandate is the least disruptive mitigation measure we can put in place - it is how we keep our economy open and our children in schools...some of which start next week. And it is how we will limit suffering and death among our fellow Louisianians. We request you put this measure in place immediately.

We appreciate your continued leadership and stand ready to support.

Thank you.



I. Steven Udvarhelyi M.D.
President and CEO





**LOUISIANA
AMBULANCE ALLIANCE**
RESPONSE — POLICY — EDUCATION

July 30, 2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards, Governor
State of Louisiana
P.O. Box 94009
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

As healthcare safety net providers, the EMS Community is deeply troubled by the recent surge in COVID cases in Louisiana.

As you know, with a 256% increase in the last 14 days, Louisiana has the highest recent COVID case growth in the nation; COVID-like illnesses, COVID cases, and COVID hospitalizations are increasing in all nine regions of the state.

This pandemic is putting both our EMS Practitioners and the patients we treat and transport at risk.

If the rate of transmission does not decrease, there is a valid concern that our EMS Services will not have the ability to respond to emergencies when needed whether they are COVID related or not. The reality is there is a limited supply of EMS related resources including but not limited to staff, supplies, and receiving facilities. These limited resources are challenging; the increase in positive COVID cases only exacerbates these challenges.

For the reasons detailed above, the EMS Services that are members of the Louisiana Ambulance Alliance support your efforts and those of your administration to curb the spread of this crippling pandemic through a mask mandate and other proven mitigation measures.

Sincerely,

Donna E Newchurch
CEO



5637 Bankers Ave.

Baton Rouge, LA 70808

(225) 926-1986 * TOLL-FREE (800) 388-6642 * FAX 926-1886

LOUISIANA DENTAL ASSOCIATION

July 30, 2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

Dentistry is an essential health care service because of its role in evaluating, diagnosing, preventing or treating oral diseases, which can affect systemic health. Beyond teeth and gums, the mouth also serves as a window to the rest of the body and can show signs of infection, nutritional deficiencies and systemic diseases. Quite simply—as the U.S. Surgeon General stated two decades ago—oral health is integral to overall health.

Louisiana dentists are committed to the long-term safety of all Louisianians with the ultimate goal of patient protection. With implementation of effective protocols from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we are protecting our patients and dental team members against transmission of COVID-19 within our offices. Building upon already strong infection control protocols already in place in health care facilities, the Louisiana Dental Association (LDA) is concerned about the rapidly increasing number of COVID-positive patients in hospitals and supports having our citizens wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of high or substantial transmission.

The LDA appreciates your leadership in guiding the State through the COVID-19 pandemic and welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with you and the LA Department of Health moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glen Corcoran', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Glen Corcoran
President, Louisiana Dental Association



**Louisiana Association of
Substance Abuse Counselors and Trainers, Inc. (LASACT)**

P.O. Box 80235 • Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70898-0235 • Phone: 225.766.2992
Fax: 225.766.8552 • email: admin@lasact.org • www.lasact.org

July 30, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

As of yesterday, Louisiana has the third lowest vaccination rate in the United States and six times as many cases per day than at the beginning of this month. Regrettably, a large number of our citizens have elected to remain unvaccinated. Thus, putting our vulnerable populations in a dangerous situation and the ability to return to any sense of normalcy in jeopardy.

Over the past year and a half, we have seen addiction professionals along with other frontline workers work tirelessly to help those affected and yet, still losing too many Louisianians.

The Delta variant appears highly transmissible and causing more severe infections among all age groups, not just those most vulnerable. It is driving case counts through the roof and sending citizens to the hospital in large numbers. We have been in this place before—daily rising cases counts.

Addiction professionals put themselves in harm's way daily only to help those battling addiction. They are around our great state exposing themselves daily to new people with varying backgrounds. They do not know the environment in which their patients are returning to after they leave their facility. Our professionals have vulnerable family members. Our professionals have people at home that they love and must protect.

From a public health standpoint, it is the suggestion of the Louisiana Association of Substance Abuse Counselors and Trainers (LASACT) that a mask mandate be reimplemented immediately across the state of Louisiana for indoor contacts where one is less than six feet of others. In order to protect our addiction professionals and their families, we believe this policy would work to limit the spread of this dangerous variant. For K-12, we suggest you follow the data and work with educators and healthcare professionals. We will support your decision. We feel our subject matter expertise is in behavioral health and others can better guide you in our education systems.

We appreciate your continued leadership in the midst of crisis and stand ready to support in whatever capacity possible.

Thank you,

LASACT Executive Committee



July 29, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards:

We write to express our strong support for your issuance of a statewide mask requirement, with a particular focus on children, teachers and support staff in K-12 institutions.

We are yet again in the midst of an alarming surge of COVID-19. As you know, children have been relatively spared by earlier surges of the virus, but the Delta variant is a game changer. At Children's Hospital New Orleans, which proudly serves children from across the state, we are seeing an alarming increase in both the number of infected children and the severity of their disease. In the past three days alone, the number of children admitted to CHNOLA because of COVID-19 has increased from just four to 20, with five admitted to intensive care. Another 30 hospitalized children are being tested for COVID-19 and the test positivity rate among patients screened in our emergency department and outpatient clinics is about 20 percent. At no point throughout the pandemic have we seen a test positivity rate in children as high as it is today.

Our health system has taken necessary steps to preserve critical resources and staffing. LCMC Health and CHNOLA have made the difficult decision to delay elective procedures due to the pressure on our staff caring for COVID-19 patients. To adequately stop the spread and flatten the curve, other mitigation measures will be required, especially the return of required masking.

Unfortunately, the worst of this COVID-19 surge is yet to come. In the face of an unprecedented summertime epidemic of another respiratory virus, RSV, and the approach of what is likely to be a severe influenza season, it is essential that we take every possible step to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We urge you to continue demonstrating your leadership by issuing a statewide mask requirement as we attempt to slow the rate of COVID-19 transmission and protect children across Louisiana. It is urgent that we do this in advance of the return of children in schools in the coming school year. As always, thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Gregory C. Feirn
Chief Executive Officer
LCMC Health

John Heaton, MD
President and Chief Medical Officer
LCMC Health

John R. Nickens IV
Chief Executive Officer
Children's Hospital New Orleans

Mark W. Kline, MD
Physician-in-Chief, Chief Academic Officer
Children's Hospital New Orleans

Louisiana Chapter

INCORPORATED IN LOUISIANA

American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

"Advocate for all children in Louisiana"

July 29, 2021

P. O. Box 64629
Baton Rouge, LA 70896
Website: www.laaap.org
Twitter: @MyLaaap
Facebook: @LouisianaAAP

Executive Committee

President
Rachel Chatters, MD, FAAP
Lake Charles, LA

Vice President
Joseph Bocchini, Jr., MD, FAAP
Shreveport, LA

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New Orleans, LA

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Covington, LA

Elizabeth Seiter, MD
Baton Rouge, LA

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John Vanchiere, MD, PhD, FAAP
Shreveport, LA

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Phone: (225) 505-7611
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Director of Education & Membership
Taryn Daigle
Lafayette, LA
Phone: (337) 945-9209
E-mail: taryn.daigle@aaap.org

Dear Governor Edwards:

As health care providers and advocates for children and public health, we urge you to reinstate a statewide mask mandate and virus mitigating measures in accordance with Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations. Considering the White House Gating Criteria, all indications show Louisiana is facing a dramatic rapidly escalating wave of COVID-19 infections.

Hospitalizations are increasing more rapidly than during the first two waves of COVID-19 experienced by our State. The high prevalence of the more transmissible Delta variant puts larger groups of individuals at risk. This is especially true for children, many of whom are not yet eligible for vaccination. Wearing a mask is their best line of defense.

Vaccination is the most important way to prevent additional infections. Given the low vaccination rates in the state and the fact that all nine regions of the state are experiencing increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases, COVID-like illnesses and COVID-19 hospitalizations, a reinstatement of mask mandates and mitigation strategies are required to control the surge that is upon us.

As the school year approaches we need to have better control of COVID-19 and the Delta variant so we can send our children and teachers back to a safe school environment. We support the back to school guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the recommendation that all children from kindergarten to grade 12 wear masks and social distance when indoors regardless of vaccination status.

As advocates for children, we care about the health and well-being of every child, and we know that vaccines, masking and social distancing are the best ways to protect them from COVID-19. We urge you to continue to support the health of all Louisiana citizens by reinstating the mask mandate in accordance with expert recommendations for the duration of the COVID-19 Delta variant surge.

Sincerely,

Rachel Chatters, MD, FAAP
Louisiana AAP President

Joseph Bocchini, Jr., MD, FAAP
Louisiana AAP Vice President

Kim Mukerjee, MD, FAAP
Louisiana AAP Secretary/ Treasurer

Bridgett Foreman, MD, FAAP
Louisiana AAP Early Career Physician

Ann Kay Logarbo, MD, FAAP
Louisiana AAP At-large member

Elizabeth Seiter, MD
Louisiana AAP At-large member

John A. Vanchiere, MD, PhD, FAAP
Louisiana AAP Immediate Past President



LOUISIANA COVID-19 HEALTH EQUITY TASK FORCE

30 July 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

It has been our pleasure to partner with your administration as co-chairs of the Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force. We have done some great work on this task force and have learned a great deal about the virus in our state and the health inequalities that have worked against our state for many years. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, our state is now in a crisis that goes beyond issues of equity.

As you are aware, cases of COVID-19 are spiking in Louisiana. Hospitals are returning to full capacity and beyond and have once again had to put a halt to elective procedures because they simply do not have the capacity. It's a heartbreaking situation, especially because it's one that was entirely preventable.

That's why, we are calling on you to mandate the COVID-19 vaccine for every citizen in the State of Louisiana.

A mandate would be a bold move, but one we feel is necessary to ensure the health of the residents of and visitors to this state. There was a time when seat belts and motorcycle helmets were not required, and when people could smoke cigarettes in office buildings and restaurants. Without a doubt many fought hard to maintain that status quo under the guise of individual freedom. Fortunately, those voices did not win out. Mandates requiring helmets, seatbelts and prohibitions against smoking indoors were put in place to protect the health of citizens, and they have.

It is now time to protect citizens from the threat of COVID-19.

Under your leadership, the state has provided easy access to vaccines at pharmacies, mobile clinics, and mass-vaccination sites. We have worked with your administration to ensure that the vaccine distribution strategies were equitable, and they are. You have provided incentives like the Shot-in-a-Million campaign. But we are still far short of where we need to be to keep our citizens, including the most vulnerable, safe.

According to Census data, there are about 4,650,000 people living in this state. As of today, the Louisiana Department of Health website estimates that 1,948,202 vaccine series have been initiated, meaning far less

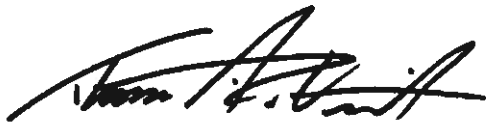
than half the population has been vaccinated. In some regions of the state, this percentage is significantly lower.

Some of those who remain unvaccinated are children under 12. Some have underlying medical conditions that prohibit them from being vaccinated. But that still leaves many people in our state who are refusing to be vaccinated. And they are putting the rest in danger. More people – including a growing number of children – are being hospitalized and many are dying an avoidable premature death.

We cannot wait around any longer.

We are calling on you, Governor Edwards, to use your position to mandate the vaccine in our state; to ensure the health of our citizens, especially, our children; and to help Louisiana get past the pandemic once and for all.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. LaVeist, PhD
Dean & Weatherhead Presidential Chair
School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine
Tulane University



Sandra C. Brown, DNS, APRN, FNP-BC, ONE,
ANEF, FAANP, FAAN
Dean and Professor
College of Nursing and Allied Health
Southern University and A&M College

 **Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council** 
SELF-DETERMINATION ♦ INDEPENDENCE ♦ PRODUCTIVITY ♦ INTEGRATION ♦ INCLUSION

July 29, 2021

Governor John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, La 70804

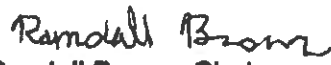
Dear Governor Edwards,

On behalf of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, I am writing to you today to ask that you consider re-instating a statewide mask mandate.

As you are aware, the positivity rate of Covid-19 cases in Louisiana has increased substantially, again making Louisiana one of the states with the highest positivity rate. Our vaccination rate across the state has also remained one of the lowest with only 36.8% of our population being fully vaccinated.

Individuals with Developmental Disabilities frequently have a variety of underlying medical issues, making them a particularly vulnerable population with regards to Covid-19. As a Council that advocates for people with Developmental Disabilities, we ask that you consider a statewide mask mandate to help protect this vulnerable population.

Thank you for your consideration,


Randall Brown, Chair



July 29, 2021

Honorable Governor John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Honorable Governor Edwards,

Unfortunately, it is clear that Louisiana is now in our fourth COVID-19 wave, with case counts and hospitalizations reaching levels that have not been seen since January. As Dr. Joseph Kanter, State Health Officer, pointed out, Louisiana is now the #1 hotspot in the country.

The Delta variant is not last year's virus. It is far more transmissible and appears to be affecting all age groups to a greater degree. Contrary to the common impression only older people experience severe outcomes, the Delta variant is hospitalizing individuals across all age groups, including children.

Our state has been here before and knows the steps needed to reverse this surge in COVID-19. The positive impact of universal masking has been widely documented, but we can also see it in our own experience in Louisiana.

To protect Louisiana's children, residents and economy, we respectfully encourage you to implement a statewide mask mandate, including in K-12 schools, as soon as possible. This, along with increasing COVID-19 vaccinations, is the way to limit the suffering and death facing our state in this fourth surge.

We appreciate your continued leadership and stand ready to support.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Schlottman", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jamie Schlottman
Plan President and CEO



LOUISIANA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

9521 BROOKLINE AVENUE • BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70809-1431
(225) 928-0026 • FAX (225) 923-1004 • www.lhaonline.org

July 30, 2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor
State of Louisiana
900 N 3rd Street, Floor 4
Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5236

Dear Governor Edwards:

As Louisiana once again faces another COVID-19 wave being fueled by the Delta variant, the demand being placed on hospitals across the state is simply unsustainable. Currently, Louisiana is experiencing the largest COVID case growth in the nation, with more than 3,500 new cases reported daily. Earlier this week, the Louisiana Department of Health reported the largest single-day increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations since March 2020.

Many of our hospitals and health systems have already taken necessary steps to preserve critical resources and staffing, such as making the difficult decision to delay non-emergent procedures. While necessary in the moment, this course of action has detrimental impacts on patients in our communities and on our facilities, and only serves as a stopgap rather than a solution. Based on the current data and projections, these actions alone are not enough to ensure adequate hospital capacity remains in communities across Louisiana without additional measures being taken by the public to flatten the curve and impede the spread of the virus.

The LHA, along with many of our hospitals and health systems, continues to promote the use of mitigation measures, such as the use of face coverings indoors, social distancing, limiting the size of indoor gatherings, and, most importantly, getting vaccinated. It is the use of these measures that makes the most significant impact in managing this pandemic through slowing the transmission and decreasing the number of cases. These mitigation measures have been proven to work, but to truly be successful, they require a higher degree of adherence.

On behalf of the frontline healthcare professionals and hospitals, the Louisiana Hospital Association urges your consideration of implementing mitigation measures across the state. Thank you for commitment and leadership during these unprecedented times and for your continued support of our hospitals and health systems.

Respectfully,

Paul A. Salles
President & CEO
Louisiana Hospital Association



5637 Bankers Ave.
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
(225) 926-1986 * TOLL-FREE (800) 388-6642 * FAX 926-1886

LOUISIANA DENTAL ASSOCIATION

July 30, 2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

Dentistry is an essential health care service because of its role in evaluating, diagnosing, preventing or treating oral diseases, which can affect systemic health. Beyond teeth and gums, the mouth also serves as a window to the rest of the body and can show signs of infection, nutritional deficiencies and systemic diseases. Quite simply—as the U.S. Surgeon General stated two decades ago—oral health is integral to overall health.

Louisiana dentists are committed to the long-term safety of all Louisianians with the ultimate goal of patient protection. With implementation of effective protocols from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we are protecting our patients and dental team members against transmission of COVID-19 within our offices. Building upon already strong infection control protocols already in place in health care facilities, the Louisiana Dental Association (LDA) is concerned about the rapidly increasing number of COVID-positive patients in hospitals and supports having our citizens wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of high or substantial transmission.

The LDA appreciates your leadership in guiding the State through the COVID-19 pandemic and welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with you and the LA Department of Health moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glen Corcoran', written over a white background.

Dr. Glen Corcoran
President, Louisiana Dental Association



July 29, 2021

Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004

Dear Governor Edwards:

The Louisiana Nursing Home Association (LNHA) is concerned about the increasing number of COVID-19 cases from the Delta variant. Nursing homes have returned to universal indoor masking regardless of vaccination status. To preserve visitation in nursing homes and to maintain access to hospital beds for nursing home residents we request that you consider reinstating the indoor mask requirement until this current surge recedes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark D. Berger". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Mark D. Berger
Executive Director



17373
Perkins Road
Baton Rouge,
LA 70810

July 29, 2021

John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

web: lsbn.state.la.us
phone: 225.755.7500
fax: 225.755.7584

Request to reinstate the mask mandate

Governor Edwards,

LSBN has been apprised, as have other state agencies, of the 4th surge of COVID-19 with all CDC gating indicators up including increases in COVID-like illnesses, increases in COVID-19 cases, and increased hospitalizations. We have been told that 84% of these cases are due to the highly infectious Delta variant. Louisiana now has the dubious distinction of having the highest COVID-19 growth rate in the United States resulting in the erasure of your tremendous progress over the last 6 months in reversing the morbidity and mortality of this virus.

LSBN is solidly behind all efforts to increase the vaccination rate of Louisianans. That won't help us in the short term. Louisiana is now an area of high transmission and the best defense we have to stop the spread of the virus and mitigate sequelae is to reinstitute the mask mandate for all indoor gatherings. Six-foot social distancing should also be reinstated.

You have provided calm and steady leadership for the past 17 months and LSBN urges you to continue your successful legacy. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Karen Carter Lyon, PhD, APRN, MBA, NEA_{BC}
Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer



**Louisiana Managed
Medicaid Association**

July 29, 2021

Honorable Governor John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Honorable Governor Edwards,

The current surge of COVID cases is overwhelming our health care system. Hospitalizations are rising at an alarming rate and elective surgeries are being postponed once again. Health care staff are being overworked both in the inpatient and outpatient settings. Louisiana is #1 in the nation for our recent COVID case growth.

Health Care Plans such as those represented by the Louisiana Managed Medicaid Association (Aetna Better Health, AmeriHealth Caritas, Healthy Blue, Louisiana Healthcare Connections, and United Health Community Plan) are extremely concerned that we have jeopardized all the progress we have made over the last several months. Despite our intense efforts to get members vaccinated, our state has very low vaccination rates providing an opportunity for the highly transmissible Delta variant to infect large amounts of people throughout the state. People may have the impression only older people are experiencing severe outcomes, but we are consistently seeing hospitalizations among all age groups, including children.

As health plans, it is very important to be able to assure our health care system can protect our members and to assure our hospitals can continue to serve their communities. We have previously reversed our surges through mitigation efforts, the most impactful being the mask mandate. We know it works and is the least disruptive mitigation measure that can be enacted. As governor, we urge you to put a statewide mask mandate in place immediately. We believe this will preserve our economy, our health system and most importantly will save lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Katly Kliebert".

Katly Kliebert
Louisiana Managed Medicaid Association

Louisiana Primary Care Association, Inc.
503 Colonial Drive
Post Office Box 966
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0966



July 29, 2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor
State of Louisiana
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

As Executive Director of the Louisiana Primary Care Association, I am reaching out to you today on behalf of Louisiana's 39 Community Health Center organizations and their 300 clinics across the state. Like other healthcare providers across Louisiana, we are growing increasingly concerned about the latest spike of COVID-19 cases and the dangerous impact the Delta variant is having on our citizens.

Since COVID-19 first arrived in Louisiana, our state has benefitted from your steady leadership and from the work of the Louisiana Department of Health. In what has been a chaotic year and a half, your administration has always kept the health and well-being of Louisiana's citizens at the forefront of every decision. **Now, as the Delta variant spreads rapidly across our state, we are asking that you re-implement the statewide mask mandate until this surge of cases subsides.**

We know that the COVID-19 vaccines are the best form of protection. Like others across our state, Community Health Centers are working tirelessly to boost vaccination rates among our patients. While we work to ramp up vaccinations, a mask mandate will ensure our citizens have one more layer of protection.

Our hospital facilities are overwhelmed. Healthcare workers are exhausted. The new surge we are currently experiencing is more dangerous and more intense than our previous surges over the course of the pandemic. Now is the time to re-implement the statewide mask mandate and other mitigation measures.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership. As always, Louisiana's Community Health Centers stand firmly behind you as we all work toward the same goal: bringing this pandemic to an end.

Sincerely,

Mike Andry
LPCA Board President

Gerelda Davis
LPCA Executive Director



LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

630 Camp Street, New Orleans, LA 70130
Web site: <http://www.lsbme.la.gov>

Phone: (504) 568-6820
Fax: (504) 568-3751

July 30, 2021

Honorable John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Re: COVID-19 Pandemic "Fourth Surge"

Dear Governor Edwards:

We write on behalf of the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners to express our urgent concern over the necessity for state measures to address the current "fourth surge" of the COVID-19 virus across the state.

Some of the alarming facts include:

- Hospitalizations are at their highest rates since the pandemic began
- Emergency room visit are increasing
- Hospitals are experiencing severe staffing shortages
- Available ICU beds are decreasing.
- Ventilator use is increasing
- Hospitals are canceling non-elective procedures
- The "delta variant" is more highly contagious than previous variants
- It appears the "delta variant" can be transmitted even by fully vaccinated persons

We urge and encourage you to take all necessary, appropriate, and aggressive steps to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic "fourth surge" in our state utilizing best practices as recommended by the CDC and/or other authoritative guidance. These measures could include but are not limited to:

- Mask mandates
- Mandatory vaccination
- Work from home
- Closure of state offices to the public

If we can be of any assistance in that effort, please do not hesitate to contact us.



LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

630 Camp Street, New Orleans, LA 70130
Web site: <http://www.lsbme.la.gov>

Phone: (504) 568-6820
Fax: (504) 568-7754

Sincerely,

**LOUISIANA STATE BOARD
OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. W. Johnson".

Lester Wayne Johnson, M.D.
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "V. A. Culotta, Jr.".

Vincent A. Culotta, Jr., M.D.
Executive Director

The Louisiana Support Coordination Alliance

ABC Case Management, Cadence of Acadiana, Children's Hospital, Easter Seals Louisiana, Medical Resources & Guidance, People Unlimited, Quality Support Coordination, Shoulders of Strength

July 29, 2021

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
State Capitol
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

The Louisiana Support Coordination Alliance membership is comprised of Support Coordination Agencies throughout the state of Louisiana. We provide services in partnership with LDH to support people with developmental disabilities and the aging who receive Home and Community Based Services in Louisiana.

The LSCA has worked with LDH throughout the COVID pandemic to support the most vulnerable citizens in our state and ensure their health and safety by maintaining ongoing contact, assessment, planning, and coordination of needed services. With the number of COVID infections on the rise, LSCA member agencies will continue our commitment to fight COVID. The majority of the member agencies support the use of masks as an effective weapon in this battle. We urge you to consider the use of masks and access to vaccines to slow the spread of COVID rather than the close businesses, which results in isolation of so many people we serve.

Thank you for your continued support and guidance of the people of Louisiana during this very difficult time.

Sincerely,

Leslie Fontenot, MS, CCM, CRC
LSCA Chairman



July 29, 2021

Hon. John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
Post Office Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Re: Mask Mandate

Dear Gov. Edwards:

In the face of the latest surge in COVID-19 cases, which may best tell the tale of the state of health in Louisiana and the pressures that Ochsner Health and other hospitals and health systems are fighting, we respectfully request that you reinstate the mask mandate that helped us all get through the early battles in our fight against this virus. You well know the latest numbers:

- The staggering report by the Louisiana Department of Health (“LDH”) two days ago of the single largest day over day increase of new cases since January 6, 2021.
- The weekly average of cases has increased by eleven times compared to one month ago.
- According to LDH’s latest dashboard, there are 1620 hospitalized patients in Louisiana hospitals with 162 on ventilators. As of today, 595 confirmed positive patients are admitted to Ochsner Health. Last month this time, we had less than 100 such patients.

Ochsner is concerned that if we do not take more aggressive community mitigation efforts to slow the spread of this Delta variant, the rapidly increasing COVID census will begin to dramatically affect our ability to care for our citizens with other illnesses. We thank you for your consideration and in continuing to protect the citizens of Louisiana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Warner L. Thomas".

Warner L. Thomas
President and Chief Executive Officer
Ochsner Health



RURAL HOSPITAL COALITION

301 Main Street
Suite 1620
Baton Rouge, LA 70801
(P) 225-389-9429
www.larhc.org

July 29, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards:

We are out of time.

We are in our fourth COVID-19 wave and with every passing day we appear to be breaking another record. Earlier this week, the Louisiana Department of Health announced 6,797 new COVID-19 cases– the second highest single-day case count reported since January 6, 2021. That same day, LDH reported 1,390 people were hospitalized with COVID-19 in Louisiana – the largest single-day increase in hospitalizations since March 2020.

As Dr. Joseph Kanter, State Health Officer, has pointed out, we have erased six months of progress.

Louisiana remains the #1 hotspot in the country.

You have said many times over the course of the COVID-19 response that it was hospital capacity you tracked most closely in making decisions about necessary mitigation measures. As headline after headline points out, our hospitals are under severe pressure and several already have halted elective procedures. We must protect our hospitals' ability to serve our communities.

We have been here before, three times in fact. The way we got out of those previous surges was through mitigation measures, the most impactful being the mask mandate you put in place. The positive impact of universal masking has been widely documented, but we can also see it in our own data, from our own experience in Louisiana.

The Delta variant is not last year's virus, and it's not just that it's far more transmissible. People may have the impression only older people are experiencing severe outcomes, but we are consistently seeing hospitalizations among all age groups, including children.

In Arkansas, another Delta variant-fueled hotspot that began its most recent before Louisiana, children's hospitals are reporting record-high numbers of children hospitalized with COVID-19.

A mask mandate is the least disruptive mitigation measure we can put in place - it is how we keep our economy open and our children in schools...some of which start next week.

We are out of time.

We need your leadership and action. We stand ready to support.

Sincerely,


Jerry L. Phillips
Executive Director


Randy Morris
Board Chairman

Alicia Williams (GOV)

From: Tony Crawford <crawfordtransit@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 29, 2021 8:40 PM
To: Alicia Williams (GOV)
Cc: Courtney Phillips; Ruth Johnson (LDH); Mark A Thomas; Stacy Guidry; bagleyl@legis.la.gov; millsf@legis.la.gov
Subject: Emergency Mask Mandate

EXTERNAL EMAIL: Please do not click on links or attachments unless you know the content is safe.

Good evening Ms. Williams,

Please forward this email to Governor John Bel Edwards.

Dear Governor John Bel Edwards,

I am representing Crawford Transit Services, Inc and Louisiana Medical Providers Coalition, Inc. We are asking you to please implement an (**emergency**) mask mandate throughout Louisiana including **K-12**. We feel a mask mandate will keep the infection rate at a slower pace while encouraging the unvaccinated to get vaccinated. We pray you move expeditiously with such implementation.

Thank you,
Tony Crawford
504-729-0529