



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on February 9, 2022

CDC and Teachers' Unions Push Back Against Unmasking Schoolchildren

While numerous states run by Democratic governors have started lifting mask mandates for schools, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky claimed that “now is not the moment” to drop mask mandates in schools and other public places. America’s second-largest teachers’ union boss echoed the statement.

In an interview with [WYPR](#)’s Tom Hall on Tuesday’s edition of the show *Midday*, Walensky said that her agency “still recommends that all schools encourage students to wear well-fitting masks consistently and while indoors. And that’s consistent with our guidance that still also recommends that people mask in public indoor settings in areas of high or substantial transmission.” Walensky, however, reaffirmed that such decisions lie within discretion of the local governments, not the CDC.



AP Images
Rochelle Walensky

Walensky went on to say that she is “cautiously optimistic” about the course of the pandemic yet noted that the number of cases is still too high for people to lower their guard. Also, the hospitalization rate is higher than it was at Delta’s peak, said the CDC chief, who not so long ago [admitted](#) that people hospitalized “with COVID” often find themselves in the hospitals for unrelated reasons. Walensky also failed to mention that her own agency has [recently found](#) that the Omicron strain is far milder than Delta. It is, actually, a whopping 91-percent less deadly than Delta, the CDC researchers observed.

Walensky further implied that keeping a mask mandate in place is a necessary prerequisite to keeping schools open, even though multiple studies ([here](#) and [here](#)) suggest that mask usage makes little to no difference in COVID transmission. In fact, the masks have been [associated](#) with *greater* COVID transmission and deaths rates.

Getting children vaccinated against COVID, Walensky added, would also play an important role in keeping community transmission rates low and would facilitate a “return to normal,” even though her own agency has confirmed that vaccinated people can still get infected and spread the infection to others (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Moreover, the agency reiterated its universal masking recommendation back in July because it found that the vaccinated spread the disease to others at similar rates as the unvaccinated. In spite of that, Walensky yet again falsely claimed during the interview that the vaccines will “protect [children] from infection, severe disease and hospitalization.”



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“I know people are interested in taking masks off. I too am interested. That would be one marker that we have much of the pandemic behind us,” Walensky told [Reuters](#) the same day.

“We have and continue to recommend masking in areas of high and substantial transmission — that is essentially everywhere in the country in public indoor settings,” she stressed.

Walensky’s comments come as several states across the country have announced plans to end statewide school mask mandates by the end of February or March.

As *The New American* [reported](#) today, Democrat governors in four deep blue states of Oregon, New Jersey, Delaware, and Connecticut all announced earlier this week that they were rolling back their indoor masking requirements, including for schools.

[California](#) is easing many of its COVID-related restrictions and lifting the indoor mask mandate for fully vaccinated people, yet continues with the requirement for K-12 schools.

On Wednesday, [New York](#) joined the club, and will end the statewide vaccine-or-mask requirement for businesses on Thursday. Masks will still be required in schools and some other places where people congregate, including healthcare facilities, shelters, and public transit stations. Counties, cities, and businesses can still impose their own rules on masking.

Teachers’ Unions

During an [interview](#) with MSNBC Tuesday morning, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten insisted kids must continue to be masked in schools until vaccination rates are high among children and community transmission rates are low. Most importantly, Weingarten wants to make sure that there is “no [COVID] transmission” happening in schools, which is practically unachievable.

She added that her union asked the CDC to develop a guidance on how to gradually lift the restrictions for schools without sacrificing safety back in November. The arrival of Omicron, however, hindered that discussion and “brought the masks back,” Weingarten said.

Weingarten appears to be a fierce advocate for vaccinating children.

“I like what Massachusetts has done. What they said, is that on a school-by-school basis, they said if there’s 80 percent vaccination rates, then the school can lift the mandates.”

The union boss seemed to be unaware that the vaccine manufacturers themselves have [admitted](#) that the vaccines that were designed against the original Wuhan strain of COVID provide “limited protection, if any” against Omicron.

Weingarten represents the second-largest teachers’ union in America.

While she asks for a “science-based” approach to the pandemic, her own organization as well as her colleagues from the largest teachers’ union, the National Education Association, were the ones who [pressured](#) the CDC to keep strict guidelines on school COVID policies. Earlier in May, NEA was [caught red-handed](#) influencing the CDC guidance.

Both of the groups are major Democrat donors (see [here](#) and [here](#)).



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