

August 19, 2021

Dear Dr. London,

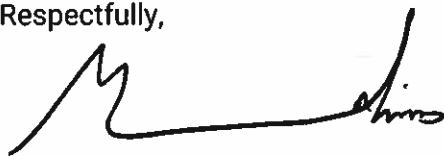
As the school year approaches and news of the delta variant and COVID-19 outbreaks in other parts of the country spreads, we are consistently hearing questions from patients, parents, coworkers, neighbors, friends and community members about wearing masks and vaccinations. The evidence is very clear on vaccinations, they dramatically lower a person's risk of serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

I want to share with you Spectrum Health's position on masks. It's simple and applies to all ages and everywhere in the community: Spectrum Health is supportive of the CDC guidance on universal masking indoors in areas of substantial and high transmission to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The CDC guidance includes students and staff in K-12 schools. Unfortunately, at this point, within our state, almost every county has substantial or high transmission of COVID-19.

When it comes to kids and schools, we can all agree that keeping kids safe while allowing them to thrive and learn in school is vitally important. To assure the greatest chance for in-person learning, universal masking is one of the best ways to prevent outbreaks and keep schools open and operational. We are fortunate to have vaccines available to older students, along with teachers and staff this academic year. However, not all students are eligible for a vaccine and emerging data shows that transmission with the delta variant can still occur amongst the vaccinated.

COVID-19 continues to produce suffering, disability and death within our communities. Given transmission within our state and the fact that the delta variant is so much more contagious than prior variants of COVID-19, vaccinations, masking and other preventative measures remain critical to prevent serious illness and to keep our kids in school. None of this is easy, but let's do all we can to keep our kids safe.

Respectfully,



Hossain Marandi, MD, MBA, FACHE

President & Children's Health Department Chief

Helen DeVos Children's Hospital