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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statewide Mask Mandate Lifted in Schools and Childcare Settings

Due to the recent decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations, cases and an increase in vaccination rates across New York State, the statewide masking requirement for K-12 students and children 2+ in childcare settings will be lifted effective Wednesday, March 2nd. Additionally, masks will no longer be required on school buses. Counties and cities with higher transmission rates will have the authority to require masks in schools. Parents/guardians may still choose to send their children to schools in masks.

“We are very happy that New York State has lifted the mask mandate in schools and childcare settings and that local officials will have the authority to make decisions regarding mask mandates,” stated Lynne M. Johnson, Chairman of the Orleans County Legislature. “We have previously said that Orleans County would not continue that mandate if the decision were left to us. We continue to hold that view and want to be clear that Orleans County will NOT be implementing any local mask mandate for our schools”.

According to the updated metrics released by the CDC regarding community transmission levels, Genesee and Orleans Counties have fallen into the “Medium” category based on the CDC data. “The Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments will not require masks in schools” stated Paul Pettit, Public Health Director for Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments. “Masking will be optional and we will continue to work with school districts in both counties to monitor COVID-19 transmission rates and respond to clusters and other issues that may arise to keep students safe and in school.”

“We encourage residents to make the best choice for their children, themselves and their personal level of risk as to whether or not they wear masks in public places including schools. We continue to encourage residents to get vaccinated, boosted and stay up to date on their vaccines,” stated Pettit.

“Some residents will choose to continue to wear masks in public places for their own safety,” stated Rochelle M. Stein, Chairman of the Genesee County Legislature. “We encourage residents to respect others personal choice and discourage mask shaming in our community. We also encourage our residents to continue focusing on personal good health practices. Masking provides another important layer of protection from COVID-19.”

At this time, masking requirements are still in effect in state-regulated healthcare settings; homeless shelters; state-regulated adult care facilities and nursing homes; correctional facilities; domestic violence centers; buses and bus stations; trains and train stations; subways and subway stations; planes and airports. People who have had symptoms of COVID-19 are still required to wear well-fitted masks in public for five additional days (day 6 through 10) after the end of the 5-day isolation period.

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