

SB 471 – School Personnel Cannot Enforce a Mask Mandate

Legislative Rubric from Science for Georgia

[SB 471](#) - Students cannot be forced by school personnel to wear a face covering unless parents are allowed to opt-out of such a rule.

Criteria	Variables			
Impact Who is going to be impacted? Is it equitable? List stakeholders & opinions.	Negative		Positive	
	Masking policies can cause significant reduction of disease transmission in schools. Masking and vaccination are stronger than vaccination alone, with teachers in one school district with a masking policy being 19% less likely to have a positive test result for COVID-19 than teachers in districts without. While this bill would not prevent mask usage, it would reduce the ability to use widespread mask usage as a tool in the event of another pandemic, which, especially when coupled with other public health tools, mitigates the effects of such large public health events.			
Reach Does it reach its target audience?	0 - No impact on target audience.	1 - Impacts narrow segment.	2 - Impacts Majority; Exceptions	3 - Impacts entire target audience
	By allowing parents to elect not to participate in mask mandates, the effectiveness of mask usage is decreased. Mandatory mask wearing decreases diagnoses and death when used universally. Mask benefits derive from the combined benefits of limited inhalation and exhalation, creating increased benefit to individuals from larger community adoption.			
Scientific Merit Does it utilize scientific research accurately?	YES - this does follow scientific research accurately. Here's why....		NO - this does not present scientific research accurately.	
	The benefits of mask use have been shown to outweigh risks. Masking may be an important way to mitigate future outbreaks of respiratory illness, especially with decreasing vaccination rates. Mandatory mask wearing has been shown to decrease diagnoses to about 2.0% from the previous 0.9% in 15 U.S. states, and potential is even higher, as in Canada, there was an estimated decline of 25%-40% in new diagnoses after mask mandates. Available data shows no harm to children’s physical health and little evidence of decreased learning outcomes. Deaf individuals and children may have inhibited verbal and nonverbal communication, but children age 7-13 were shown to make emotional inferences about people with partially covered faces. Transparent surgical masks are also now approved by the FDA. Additionally, while a recent study in Denmark has been cited as showing no merit in cloth or surgical masks, the study had inconclusive results.			

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Financial Feasibility Is it financially feasible? or does this have burdensome finances (higher taxes, future costs, etc)?	0 - Extremely high costs	1 - Expensive but can be done	2 - Slight	3 - No financial burden
	Mask mandates necessitate the buying of masks, which can be low cost and may be provided by health agencies in pandemics. However, electing to use disposable masks may create a higher environmental cost.			
Political Feasibility Level of opposition and partisan disagreement.	0 - Majority disagreed, regardless of party.	1 – Split along party lines	2 - Minimal Opposition	3 - Complete consensus (zero to five 'Nays').
	This bill is entirely Republican sponsored but passed the Senate with 51 yeas and 1 nay.			
Measurable Metrics? We recommend looking at these 3 metrics. Is the data available or being measured?	0 - no data	1 - some data / not accessible	2 - most data / somewhat accessible	3 - complete transparency
	Data is limited by the existence of other public health measures alongside masking in observational studies of the pandemic, but researchers have attempted to control for these issues. Learning outcomes are being measured but will need a longer timespan to see long term effects.			