

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 30, 2021

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Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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It has been almost 18 months since the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic came crashing down on Americans. However, in the past eight months, we have witnessed an enormous accomplishment—the authorization of three safe and effective vaccines and the inoculation of over one hundred million Americans against this deadly disease. But recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised mask guidance—once again—to recommend that individuals in about 63% of counties wear masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status. Unfortunately, the CDC has not been transparent with the data underlying this decision, sowing confusion and distrust. So, we write to ask that you publicize this data and explain how it justifies a blanket and open-ended policy.

From January to April of this year, the CDC collected data on all breakthrough infections—cases where vaccinated individuals test positive for COVID-19. However, in May, the CDC stopped monitoring these cases and, instead, shifted to monitoring breakthrough infections that ended in hospitalization or death.¹ But, according to media reports, some states are still collecting this data and you are still providing resources for states to submit this data to the CDC.² In fact, an ABC News story published the day before your most recent mask guidance cites an unpublished CDC report claiming that less than 0.1 percent of fully vaccinated individuals have experienced a breakthrough infection.³

We understand the CDC has concerns that those who experience these infections may be able to transmit the virus, contributing to the recent surge of COVID cases in certain areas of the country. But, we are deeply concerned that you have released blanket guidance seeking to reduce this transmission when you have not yet even provided data on the frequency of breakthrough infections to the public. Dr. Anthony Fauci has said that the science has evolved with the virus. We ask that you provide us and the American people that science. Additionally, we share Dr. Scott Gottlieb's concern that CDC's recent models show no actionable information about the

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 Breakthrough Case Investigations and Reporting (updated July 15, 2021), available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-departments/breakthrough-cases.html>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Public health investigations of COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough cases: Case investigation protocol, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/COVID-vaccine-breakthrough-case-investigations-Protocol.pdf>; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 Vaccine Breakthrough Case Investigation Form (updated March 23, 2021), available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/COVID-19-Vaccine-Breakthrough-Case-Investigation-Form.pdf>

³ Arielle Mitropoulos, *Symptomatic breakthrough COVID-19 infections rare, CDC data estimates*, ABC NEWS (July 26, 2021), available at <https://abcnews.go.com/US/symptomatic-breakthrough-covid-19-infections-rare-cdc-data/story?id=79048589>

trajectory of this current surge in cases.⁴ If your agency cannot even provide reliable predictions about current transmission, we question your ability to estimate the extent to which breakthrough infections are expected to drive the overall number of cases among the unvaccinated.

We worry this shifting mask guidance and lack of transparency signals the CDC does not have a plan to show the American people what benchmarks need to be achieved to bring their lives back to normal. Since your agency has so far provided minimal guidance to lawmakers and the public, we ask that you respond to the following questions:

1. Does the CDC have reliable data that show the number of breakthrough COVID-19 infections in the U.S. since January 2021? If so, please provide them.
2. Does the CDC have reliable models that estimate the extent to which breakthrough infections are expected to drive the overall number of COVID-19 cases? If so, please provide them.
3. How did these data and models inform your decision on July 27, 2021 to revise mask guidance for vaccinated Americans? If these data and models did not inform your decision, please provide the data and models that did.
4. If current U.S. vaccination rates do not significantly increase in the coming months, what transmission, hospitalization, death, or other metrics will need to be met for CDC to rescind the mask guidance for vaccinated Americans issued on July 27, 2021?

Thank you for your prompt attention to these questions.



Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress



Mike D. Rogers
Member of Congress



Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress

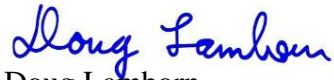


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⁴ Gottlieb, Scott. Twitter Post. July 24, 2021, 10:16 AM.
<https://twitter.com/ScottGottliebMD/status/1418938128786595840>



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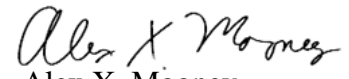
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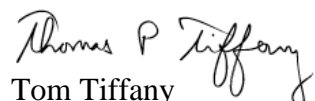
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