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### **Stark County Board of Health Statement on Masking in Schools and on School Buses**

This year our students, parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, and volunteers will once again navigate uncharted waters of going back to school during a global pandemic. Last year, our county saw the commitment to the importance of education and moving forward under difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, COVID-19 and its variants are on the rise. We all must make decisions to be safe and stay healthy this year. The Stark County Board of Health wants to make a few things clearer as we enter the 2021-2022 school year:

1. The Stark County Board of Health strongly recommends that masks be worn by students, staff, visitors, and volunteers at all times while inside of school facilities. We support this CDC masking guidance for those vaccinated and unvaccinated. Please review that guidance [here](#). We also understand that the passing of Senate Bill 22 greatly impacted the ability of the governor, the Ohio Department of Health, and local health departments to issue mandates/orders in emergency situations, more specifically for any orders mandating masks in schools. These issues are now put squarely into the hands of the local school boards, which hold the sole authority to make and change district policies and procedures.
2. The Stark County Board of Health supports the federal requirement for masks on public transportation conveyances and at transportation hubs (i.e. school buses). Please review the entire federal mandate [here](#). A FAQ for masking on public conveyances has been created and can be found [here](#).
3. The Stark County Health Department still has the legal authority, under Ohio Revised Code – Chapter 37, to isolate cases of COVID-19 and to quarantine their contacts.

We understand that this pandemic has been difficult on everyone in our community, especially on our young people. It is important that we remind everyone that we do have a solution that can and will make this current situation better: the COVID-19 vaccine. It is proven that the vaccine helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If you are 12 years of age and older, please consider scheduling your appointment at [ArmorVax.com](https://armorvax.com) or call 330.451.1681 for scheduling assistance. Minors must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. These vaccines are effective and have gone through the same vaccine safety measures as any other vaccination. We invite you to review our FAQ on the vaccines [here](#). We wish you all a safe and healthy school year.

Sincerely,

The Stark County Board of Health

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