

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 17, 2021

The Honorable Brian P. Kemp
Governor
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp,

Across Georgia, teachers and school support staff are currently working in classrooms without adequate protection from COVID-19 in place to ensure their safety and that of their students. This challenge is even more acute as new and more contagious strains of the COVID-19 virus appear to be spreading in the state. However, many school districts — including Forsyth County in my own congressional district — are not following even the most basic aspects of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) public health and safety guidelines, such as requiring mask-wearing while indoors at schools.

While I continue to support prioritizing vaccination of our teachers and school support staff, the state has chosen a different path. It is now more important than ever that state leaders, yourself included, take action to ensure school safety, until the vaccine is widely available. Tragically, several teachers and paraprofessionals have already died after contracting COVID-19. I have heard a number of stories of others in schools who have contracted the disease or found that they may have unwittingly spread it to members of their family.

On February 12th the CDC issued updated guidelines for safely implementing in-person instruction in K-12 schools. Schools operating in communities with moderate to low community transmission rates, as indicated by the total number of new cases and the percentage of positive test results during the last seven days, are encouraged to implement the following measures:

1. Universal and correct use of masks
2. Physical distancing
3. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
4. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities
5. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the health department

In order to keep educators, support staff, students, parents, and the community at large safe, it is essential that these policies be rigorously followed. Unfortunately, at present, that is not the case.

I strongly urge you to work with the Georgia Department of Education and individual school districts to ensure they are following safe practices. These practices are the same ones many private sector employers, such as grocery stores, implement to protect their staff, as well as the community at large. Surely our teachers and school staff deserve the same level of protection.

As a working mother, I am deeply sympathetic to the desire for in-person learning. As a member of Congress, I am working as hard as I can to support federal and state efforts to increase vaccination access as rapidly as possible, as well as to increase support for schools to implement COVID safety strategies. Until we can reach a high level of vaccination, it is incumbent upon all of us to continue doing all we can to protect our community by following public health guidelines.

I hope you will bear that in mind and exercise your authority in order to protect teachers and support staff.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Bourdeaux". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carolyn Bourdeaux

Member of Congress