

**PUBLIC NOTICE TO ALL RESIDENTS OF, VISITORS TO, AND OWNERS,
TENANTS, AND OCCUPIERS OF CERTAIN INDOOR PREMISES TO WHICH THE
PUBLIC IS INVITED OR ALLOWED TO ASSEMBLE WITHIN
CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA**

**AN ORDER OF THE CUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR
RESCINDING THE ORDER ISSUED AUGUST 27, 2021, REQUIRING ALL PERSONS
TO WEAR FACE COVERINGS WHEN INDOORS TO ABATE THE TRANSMISSION
OF COVID-19 AND TO ISSUE AN ORDER TO ABATE THE TRANSMISSION OF
COVID-19 BY RECOMMENDING THE WEARING OF FACE COVERINGS IN
INDOOR SPACES WITHIN CUMBERLAND COUNTY**

WHEREAS, on August 27, 2021, the undersigned issued an Order to Abate the Transmission of COVID-19 requiring that persons wear face coverings in public indoor spaces within Cumberland County as a protective public health measure to limit the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, since the issuance of that order on August 27, 2021, the metrics of the transmission of COVID-19 have improved as follows:

The rate of new COVID-19 diagnosis has declined in Cumberland County from 1,456 per 100,000 residents on January 18, 2022 to 374 per 100, 000 residents on February 15, 2022;

The positivity rate of COVID-19 infections in North Carolina has decreased from a peak of 36.3% on January 22, 2022, to 14.4% on February 15, 2022, and the positivity rate for Cumberland County has decreased from 37.8% on January 31, 2022, to 25.5% on February 15th and continues to decline;

The number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in Cape Fear Valley Health System's hospitals within Cumberland County has decreased from 172 several weeks ago to 106 as of February 15, 2022; and

WHEREAS, substantial progress has been made in COVID-19 vaccinations and the availability of testing and treatment options, as follows:

Safe and effective vaccines that reduce the risk of severe hospitalization and death are widely available at no cost to all Cumberland County residents who wish to receive one, and all eligible Cumberland County residents are encouraged to get vaccinated;

Boosters are now available to all Cumberland County residents 12 and older to strengthen and extend protections against COVID-19, and all eligible residents are encouraged to get a booster shot;

as of February 14, 2022, approximately 85.8% of the Cumberland County population five (5) years of age and older has received at least one dose and 63.6% were fully vaccinated;

Clinical trials for a vaccine for children six (6) month to less than five (5) years old are ongoing and data is expected to be finalized by April 2022;

COVID-19 testing capacity has expanded. There are more than 40 COVID-19 test locations in Cumberland County. Most people with a health plan can receive a COVID-19 test at no cost either through reimbursement or through their insurance. Free rapid antigen at-home tests to every U.S household from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services.

The Food and Drug Administration has issued Emergency Use Authorizations for several therapeutics to treat of mild to moderate COVID-19 for those that are at high risk for severe disease, hospitalization, and death, including treatment options effective against the omicron variant; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland County Board of Education determined to cease compliance with the Order of August 27, 2021, within the public schools of Cumberland County effective February 16, 2022; and

WHEREAS, with more than 50,000 students in the public schools throughout all of Cumberland County, it is no longer practicable to seek enforcement of the Order of August 27, 2021.

EFFECTIVENESS OF FACE COVERINGS

WHEREAS, face coverings are a low-cost and highly effective way of mitigating the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) has provided peer-reviewed scientific evidence of face coverings effectively blocking exhaled virus from an individual wearing a face covering, evidence of reduction in exposure to the virus for someone wearing a face covering, and evidence of the effectiveness of abating transmission in communities wearing face coverings; and

WHEREAS, the CDC has provided peer-reviewed scientific evidence that consistent use of a face mask or respirator in indoor public settings was associated with lower percentage (56%-83%) of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis with respirators (e.g. N95 or KN95) provided the most protection.

CONTINUING RISK OF COVID-19

WHEREAS, despite the recent improving trends, COVID-19 remains a deadly and dangerous contagious disease; and

WHEREAS, the CDC reports that the current Omicron variant of COVID-19 is more infectious and is leading to increased transmissibility when compared to other variants, even in vaccinated individuals; and

WHEREAS, the CDC advises that viruses constantly change through mutation and new variants of viruses are expected to occur; and

WHEREAS, individuals who are not yet vaccinated or partially vaccinated, remain at the greatest risk for infection and severe illness; and

WHEREAS, statewide, 61% of identified COVID-19 cases were among the unvaccinated and 66% of COVID-19 hospitalizations were among those who were not yet fully vaccinated; and

WHEREAS, 12% of children five (5) to eleven (11) and 35% of children twelve (12) to seventeen (17) have received two doses of Pfizer, leaving the majority of school aged children in Cumberland County unvaccinated; and

WHEREAS, as ordered by the CDC, masks remain required by people on public transportation conveyances or on the premises of transportation hubs to prevent spread of the virus that causes COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, public schools and non-public schools and operators of childcare facilities are required to comply with masking control measures after a positive COVID-19 diagnosis or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms as outlined in the NC DHHS Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit and the NC DHHS ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit, respectively; and

WHEREAS, the CDC and the NC DHHS have issued guidance recommending all people, to include those are vaccinated, to wear masks in indoor in public spaces while the highly contagious Omicron variant spreads; and

WHEREAS, if you are 2 years or older and are not up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines, you should wear a mask indoors in public while Cumberland County remains in substantial or high transmission; and

WHEREAS, if you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines, to maximize protection and prevent possibly spreading COVID-19 to others, you should wear a mask indoors in public while Cumberland County remains in a state of substantial or high transmission; and

WHEREAS, settings that serve populations not yet eligible to be vaccinated and settings with low vaccination rates in counties in a state of substantial or high transmission should continue to implement universal masking as recommended by the CDC and the NC DHHS; and

WHEREAS, if the county's COVID-19 case rate, case positivity rate, or hospitalizations increase, or if new evidence arises regarding the risks of COVID-19 and its variants, it may be

necessary to reevaluate whether additional restrictions are necessary to reduce the risk of death and serious illness from COVID-19.

BASED ON THE FOREGOING FINDINGS OF FACT, I, the Cumberland County Public Health Director, conclude as follows:

(1) The current Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus is highly transmissible and has more serious health consequences for unvaccinated persons within Cumberland County.

(2) Cumberland County remains in high transmission as defined by the CDC.

(3) There is widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccinations for everyone age 5 and older and booster shots available for everyone 12 and older.

(4) Vaccination rates in Cumberland County have increased.

(5) Hospitalizations for COVID-19 patients have decreased.

(6) There are authorized treatment options for those at greatest risk for severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

(7) COVID-19 testing capacity has increased in Cumberland County

(8) The action of the Cumberland County Board of Education to elect the mask option setting for public schools makes it impracticable to seek enforcement of the Order of August 27, 2021.

BASED ON THE FOREGOING CONCLUSIONS, I, the Cumberland County Public Health Director, pursuant to the authority vested in me by N.C.G.S. §§130A-19, 130A-20 and 130A-41, do hereby order as follows:

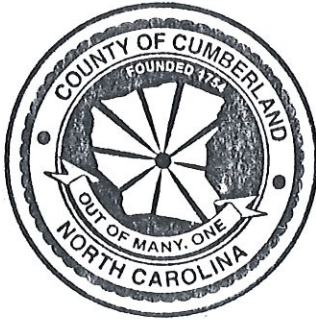
(1) The Order issued August 27, 2021, requiring all persons to wear face coverings when indoors to abate the the transmission of COVID-19 is rescinded effective February 20, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.rescind the order the abatement of the imminent public health hazard arising from the high rate of incidence of COVID-19 within Cumberland County issued August 27, 2021.

(2) I further recommend that all persons within Cumberland County continue to wear a face covering while within indoor public places except when actively eating or drinking until such time as the positive rate of infection of COVID-19 is less than eight percent (8%).

(3) This Order shall apply to Cumberland County and all the municipalities located within Cumberland County except for that portion of Cumberland County or any

municipality that lies within the boundary of the Fort Bragg Military Reservation.

- (4) This Order shall be distributed to the news media and other organizations within Cumberland County calculated to bring its contents to the attention of the general public and the businesses within Cumberland County, filed with the Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, the Clerk of each municipality, and posted on the websites of the Cumberland County Department of Public Health and Cumberland County with additional information necessary to effectively implement it.



Jennifer Green, PHD
Cumberland County Public Health Director

Attest:

Candice H. White
Clerk to the Board of Commissioners