



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**CITY TO REMOVE MASK AND VACCINE REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN PUBLIC SETTINGS ON FEBRUARY 28 IN RESPONSE TO CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IN COVID-19 METRICS**

*Rapid decrease in key metrics allow for easing of mitigation measures*

**CHICAGO** – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and Public Health Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D., announced today that the City will remove the mask and vaccine requirements for certain public spaces on February 28 to align with the State of Illinois' previously announced plans to lift the statewide indoor mask mandate on that day.

“Based on key data, it looks as if the worst of the Omicron surge is behind us and we will be able to safely remove these emergency measures instituted to protect the health and safety of our residents,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “I want to thank Chicagoans and in particular, our business community for adhering to these measures and helping us pass through this difficult time while keeping restaurants and other businesses open.”

The key metrics of the City has been used to track COVID-19 cases and hospital capacity since early in the pandemic including COVID-19 cases diagnosed per day, test positivity, and hospital and ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients. As of February 21, the 7-day-rolling-average test positivity (now 1.5% in Chicago), hospital COVID-19 census, and ICU COVID-19 census have all reached the pre-defined “lower” risk category, meaning they have been in an acceptable lower risk range for the last week. COVID-19 lab-confirmed cases (now 283 cases per day in Chicago) remain just above the historic “lower” risk range – but this is offset by the much higher testing and very low-test positivity. By February 28, assuming declines continue in the 7-day rolling average, the city will have been in the lower risk range for two weeks and able to lift these restrictions.

“Since COVID-19 arrived in Chicago, we have been guided by the data when making decisions about necessary steps to protect people and keep from overwhelming our healthcare system,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “This doesn’t



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mean COVID is gone, it simply means transmission levels are lower than they have been during surges. I still encourage people to take precautions and definitely get vaccinated to protect yourself and your loved ones.”

The vaccine requirement for restaurants, bars, gyms and other indoor public settings where food and beverages are served went into effect on January 3 in response to the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases both locally and nationally, driven in part by the Omicron variant. More Chicagoans were hospitalized with COVID-19 during the Omicron surge than at any prior point in the pandemic and the great majority of these hospitalizations were in unvaccinated Chicagoans.

Masks will continue to be required in health care settings, on public transit, and in other congregate settings. As the City transitions its mitigation measures to remove the mask requirement, many Chicagoans will continue to wear masks in public spaces for a variety of reasons, even if they are vaccinated. For example, after 5 days of isolation or quarantine, masks will continue to be required in days 6-10 in public spaces, as they are now. CDPH recommends Chicagoans who may be immunocompromised or have a family member who is immunocompromised still wear a mask, as well residents under the age of 5 who are still not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. Please be kind and considerate of your fellow Chicagoans and the decisions we all continue to make to protect themselves and those around them.

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