

August 11, 2021

Dear Board of Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran,


On behalf of the 28,000 higher education faculty and academic professionals the United Faculty of Florida represents in the Florida State University System and the Florida College System, **we write to you to ask that you require all state colleges to follow CDC recommendations, including universal masking indoors and other common-sense measures, to limit severe illness and keep our colleges and universities open for learning.** Florida's higher education classrooms must be safe and healthy learning environments this fall; no other considerations, political or otherwise, should come into the equation. We urge state leaders like yourself, as well as local administrators, to follow the guidance of the CDC before more of Florida's students, faculty, staff, family members, and other loved ones are killed by this virus. As such, we ask you to support the following measures:

1. Effective immediately, all higher ed campuses in Florida must follow CDC recommendations, including masking indoors.
2. All higher ed students and faculty should be vaccinated, and higher ed campuses must support and facilitate vaccination drives as quickly as possible to avoid virus outbreaks in dorms, cafeterias, and other high traffic campus areas.
3. All of Florida's higher ed campuses must provide sufficient remote/online teaching and learning opportunities to faculty and students who need them—no one should have to choose between their lives and their education or paycheck.

In the past few weeks, Florida has become the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, with positivity rates and hospitalizations approaching—and in some cases exceeding—those from the height of the health crisis in Spring 2020. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that even vaccinated people should return to wearing masks in public indoor spaces in areas with substantial or high COVID transmission—a recommendation that includes higher education. These new developments have made the members of UFF deeply concerned about the safety of Florida's college and university classrooms this Fall semester, especially now that you have taken virtually no action to protect the lives and welfare of this state's higher ed students, faculty, and staff, and, in some instances, have even stood in the way of reasonable safety precautions.

Please, do the right thing. We all want the best for the people of Florida and requiring indoor masking in our higher education system's classrooms will be an important first step toward keeping our students, faculty, staff, and other loved ones safe and secure, as, together, we respond to this next crisis in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,



Andrew Gothard, Ph.D.

President, United Faculty of Florida