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March 3, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

This week, I attended your State of the Union Address, in which you spoke maskless to a largely unmasked audience that included U.S. Senators, U.S. Representatives, Supreme Court Justices, and, notably, members of your Joint Chiefs of Staff. You noted that our country has “reached a new moment” in the coronavirus pandemic and called on Americans to begin resuming their pre-COVID work and lifestyle routines. Accordingly, you said that “Americans can remove their masks, return to work, stay in the classroom, and move forward safely.” This return to pre-COVID life is welcome and long overdue.

However, current guidance from your Department of Defense (DOD) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would keep large numbers of U.S. military service members in masks for the foreseeable future based on their county’s COVID-19 Community Level. In my home state of Mississippi, for instance, Naval Air Station Meridian in Lauderdale County remains in a COVID-19 Community Level designated as “high,” according to the CDC. This designation requires all Navy personnel at NAS Meridian to wear a mask at all times indoors. This critical installation is one of only two locations in the nation that trains Navy and Marine Corps fighter pilots and should not have a mask mandate in place.

This masking requirement at DOD installations extends far beyond Mississippi and impacts Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines across the country. Despite your comment that Americans can remove their masks and return to work, many major DOD installations will still be under a mask mandate imposed by DOD based on CDC guidance, including:

- Fort Bragg, North Carolina
- Fort Campbell, Kentucky
- Naval Base San Diego, California
- Naval Station Mayport, Florida
- Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri

If our Commander-in-Chief and Joint Chiefs of Staff can work with high-level staff without a mask, then surely our men and women in uniform across this country should be able to do the same. I ask that you move to fix this disparity without delay.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator