



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
ARLINGTON

Office of Catholic Schools

200 North Glebe Road, Suite 503 • Arlington, VA 22203  
Office (703) 841-2519 • Fax (703) 524-8670  
catholicschools@arlingtondiocese.org

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Dear Pastors, Heads of School and Principals,

By now you are all aware of Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 2, "Reaffirming the Rights of Parents in the Upbringing, Education, and Care of Their Children." The order rescinds Governor Northam's Executive Order 79 of 2021 and states, in critical part, "*The parents of any child enrolled in a[n] elementary or secondary school or a school based early childcare and educational program may elect for their children not to be subject to any mask mandate in effect at the child's school or educational program.*" Executive Order 2 takes effect on Monday, January 24, 2022.

The health and safety of all students and staff in our schools, while maintaining in-person instruction, remains our top priority. Throughout the pandemic, our Catholic schools have been directed to follow state and local public health directives. Where those have been in conflict, the state requirement has primacy. *Therefore, Diocesan direction to our schools is to continue following local public health guidance, without however, violating the rights of parents as described in Executive Order 2.* The governor's executive order is clear on the right of parents not to have their child be subject to a mask mandate.

Heads of school and principals should provide updated school-specific guidance to faculty/staff and parents in the wake of this letter. As always, we remain fully committed to partnering with parents to ensure their children receive a well-rounded Catholic education, fostering spiritual, intellectual, and social growth, in a safe environment. Schools should continue to use a range of mitigation strategies, including CDC recommendations. The diocese continues to elect to follow CDC guidelines for isolation of those who contract COVID-19 and quarantining for those who come in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Moments of change are challenging and I am very grateful to all of you for the leadership you are providing to your school communities.

Sincerely in Christ,

Joseph E. Vorbach III  
Superintendent of Schools