

Amended Motion to Recommend Faculty Authority Regarding Mask Changes

The James Madison University Faculty Senate

February 2022

WHEREAS eighteen million children in the US remain unvaccinated, not by choice, but because they are under the age of 5. The CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report released February 15, 2022 notes: “Once the Omicron variant became predominant, peak population-based COVID-19–associated hospitalization rates among children and adolescents were *four times as high* as rates during the peak of the Delta period. Children aged 0–4 years, who were ineligible for vaccination during this time, experienced the *largest increase* in hospitalization rates.” Many JMU faculty are parents of children under the age of 5 and thus remain members of unvaccinated households.

WHEREAS COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against COVID-19 associated hospitalization and death. However, vaccinated persons who are older, immunosuppressed, or have other underlying conditions remain at a higher risk of severe outcomes (CDC MMWR Report January 7, 2022). Many JMU faculty have these risk factors or reside with people who do.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED the JMU Faculty Senate urges the JMU administration to preserve the campus-wide mask mandate for the remainder of the Spring 2022 semester. If it is decided that JMU will lift the campus-wide mask mandate, academic spaces will be an exception to this change. Academic spaces include classrooms, where students and faculty are often required to be in close proximity for extended periods of time, as well as academic gatherings of faculty and/or students. If it is decided that JMU is unable to make academic spaces an exception to this change, then faculty must be allowed, according to their own personal risk calculations, to either: 1) require mask wearing in their classrooms; or 2) migrate courses to online formats to ensure the safety of themselves and their families.

BE IT THEREFORE FURTHER RESOLVED that the JMU Faculty Senate urges the JMU Young Children’s Program, which primarily serves 3- and 4-year-olds on our campus, to continue to require masks for children enrolled in the program for the remainder of the Spring 2022 semester.