

# U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Leads Republicans in calling on CDC to release info on breakthrough infections of COVID-19

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) today led more than 40 members of the House Republican conference in calling on CDC Director Rochelle Walensky to publish the available data on the frequency of breakthrough infections of COVID-19 in vaccinated individuals. The letter, which was first reported by Fox News, highlights how the CDC stopped collecting this information in May and expresses concern that the CDC is unable to make reliable predictions with existing data. The letter also expresses concern that these deficiencies hinder the CDC's ability to know how breakthrough infections will drive an increase in COVID-19 cases. In part, the lawmakers write, "We are deeply concerned that the CDC has released blanket guidance seeking to reduce this transmission when they have not even provided data on the frequency of breakthrough infections to the public. Dr. Anthony Fauci has said that the science has evolved with the virus. We ask that you provide us and the American people that science."

Specifically, the letter asks Director Walensky four questions, including:

1. Does the CDC have reliable data that show the number of breakthrough COVID-19 infections in the U.S. since January 2021? If so, please provide them.
2. Does the CDC have reliable models that estimate the extent to which breakthrough infections are expected to drive the overall number of COVID-19 cases? If so, please provide them.
3. How did these data and models inform your decision on July 27, 2021 to revise mask guidance for vaccinated Americans? If these data and models did not inform your decision, please provide the data and models that did.
4. If current U.S. vaccination rates do not significantly increase in the coming

months, what metrics will need to be met for CDC to rescind the mask guidance for vaccinated Americans issue on July 27, 2021?

The letter was also signed by: Reps. Elise Stefanik, Mike Rogers, Lee Zeldin, Virginia Foxx, Glenn Grothman, William Timmons, Troy Balderson, Blake Moore, Bryan Steil, Scott Fitzgerald, Bob Gibbs, John Rutherford, Alex Mooney, Bill Huizenga, Gary Palmer, Jodey C. Arrington, Robert J. Wittman, Jeff Duncan, Brad Wenstrup, Van Taylor, W. Gregory Steube, Chris Jacobs, Andy Biggs, Mike Johnson, Ronny L. Jackson, Rick Crawford, Russ Fulcher, Roger Williams, Louie Gohmert, Diana Harshbarger, Nicole Malliotakis, Jim Banks, Tom Emmer, Doug Lamborn, Byron Donalds, Chip Roy, Brian Mast, Robert Aderholt, Michael Waltz, Lance Gooden, Tom Tiffany, Mike Bost, Marianne Miller Meeks, Rick W. Allen, Ralph Norman, and Richard Hudson.

The full letter can be found [HERE](#) or read below:

Dr. Walensky,

It has been almost 18 months since the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic came crashing down on Americans. However, in the past seven months, we have witnessed an enormous accomplishment—the authorization of three safe and effective vaccines and the inoculation of over one hundred million Americans against a deadly disease. But recently, you revised mask guidance—once again—to recommend that individuals in about 63% of counties wear masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status. Unfortunately, your agency has not been transparent with the data underlying this decision, sowing confusion and distrust. So, we write to ask that you publicize this data and explain how it justifies a blanket and open-ended policy.

From January to April of this year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collected data on all breakthrough infections—cases where vaccinated individuals test positive for COVID-19. However, in May, CDC stopped monitoring these cases and, instead, shifted to monitoring breakthrough infections that ended in hospitalization or death.[1] But, according to media reports, some states are still collecting this data and you are still providing resources for states to submit data to CDC.[2] In fact, an ABC News story published the day before your most recent mask guidance cites an unpublished CDC report claiming that less than 0.1 percent of fully vaccinated individuals have experienced a breakthrough infection.[3]

We understand you have concerns that those who experience these infections may be able to transmit the virus, contributing to the recent surge of COVID cases in certain areas of the country. We are deeply concerned that the CDC has released blanket guidance seeking to reduce this transmission when they have not even provided data on the frequency of breakthrough infections to the public. Dr.

Anthony Fauci has said that the science has evolved with the virus. We ask that you provide us and the American people that science. Additionally, we share Dr. Scott Gottlieb's concern that CDC's recent models show no actionable information about the trajectory of this surge.[4] If your agency cannot even provide reliable predictions about current transmission, we question your ability to estimate the extent to which breakthrough infections are expected to drive the overall number of cases among the unvaccinated.

We worry this shifting mask guidance signals the CDC does not have a plan to show the American people what benchmarks need to be achieved to bring their lives back to normal. Since your agency has so far providing minimal guidance to lawmakers and the public, we ask that you respond to the following questions:

1. Does the CDC have reliable data that show the number of breakthrough COVID-19 infections in the U.S. since January 2021? If so, please provide them.
2. Does the CDC have reliable models that estimate the extent to which breakthrough infections are expected to drive the overall number of COVID-19 cases? If so, please provide them.
3. How did these data and models inform your decision on July 27, 2021 to revise mask guidance for vaccinated Americans? If these data and models did not inform your decision, please provide the data and models that did.
4. If current U.S. vaccination rates do not significantly increase in the coming months, what metrics will need to be met for CDC to rescind the mask guidance for vaccinated Americans issue on July 27, 2021?

[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-departments/-breakthrough-cases.html>

[2] <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/COVID--vaccine-breakthrough-case-investigations-Protocol.pdf>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/COVID-19--Vaccine-Breakthrough-Case-Investigation-Form.pdf>

[3] <https://abcnews.go.com/US/symptomatic-breakthrough--covid-19-infections-rare-cdc-data/story?id=79048589>

[4] <https://twitter.com/ScottGottliebMD/status/1418938128786595840>