



**Jared Golden**  
Congress of the United States  
2nd District of Maine  
June 2, 2021

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, MD, MPH  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Admiral Karl Schultz  
Commandant  
United States Coast Guard  
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20593

Dear Director Walensky and Admiral Schultz:

Thank you for the ongoing efforts of CDC employees and Coast Guardsmen to keep the public safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. I write in response to feedback from Maine fishermen who report that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) is enforcing a mask mandate on commercial fishermen that applies at all times when they are onboard a fishing vessel. While I understand the importance of masking for COVID-19 mitigation, I respectfully urge your agencies to collaborate to update masking requirements for commercial fishermen to reflect the low risk of COVID-19 transmission by fully vaccinated people in non-public settings. Updating the guidance to clarify that it does not apply to small commercial fishing vessels would ease an unnecessary compliance burden on fishermen, free up USCG resources, and help maintain public trust that COVID-19-related public health mandates are science-driven and necessary.

There are two primary problems with the CDC and USCG's current joint approach to mask requirements on commercial fishing vessels. First, the requirement is derived from an executive order (EO 13998) aimed at promoting the safety of "public modes of transportation," a definition that includes "public maritime vessels, including ferries." While it makes sense to impose stricter masking requirements on transportation hubs and modes of transportation where members of the public from different households congregate in close quarters, it is hard to understand why the agencies have interpreted this executive order to cover commercial maritime vessels that are not open to the general public.

Second, the CDC updated its masking guidance on May 13<sup>th</sup> to reflect that fully vaccinated people can safely participate in a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities without wearing a mask. While other federal, state, local, or private sector masking rules may apply in a given situation, it appears that many activities on commercial fishing vessels should be safe for fully vaccinated fishermen to resume without needing to wear a mask. This is particularly true for the lobster boats common on Maine's coast, where a captain works alone or with a small number of crew in the open air to set and pull traps. So, it no longer appears warranted to require all commercial fishermen to mask at all times onboard non-public vessels.

I stand ready to work with your agencies as they consider updates to COVID-19 mask mandates to reflect our evolving understanding of vaccine effectiveness and how that impacts virus transmission risks in settings including commercial fishing vessels. Should you have any

questions about this letter, please contact me or direct your staff to contact Will Woodworth (will.woodworth@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared F. Golden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jared F. Golden  
Member of Congress