

THE MASKS FOR ALL ACT

The Masks for All Act would require the federal government to use all available authorities, including the Defense Production Act, to eliminate all shortages of N95 respirator masks and distribute them to the public as soon as possible. This legislation was first introduced in 2020 and announced in a joint [CNN op-ed](#) by Senator Sanders and Andy Slavitt, former Acting Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services under President Obama and COVID-19 advisor to President Biden.

Under the Masks for All Act, every person in the United States – including individuals who are experiencing homelessness or living in congregate settings such as prisons, shelters, college dorms and assisted living facilities – would receive a package of three N95 respirator masks, free of charge. Individuals would be able to pick up additional masks at convenient community locations that are already providing essential services, such as post offices, pharmacies, schools, public transportation stations, and COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites. Finally, the bill would provide needed N95 respirators to all workers in health settings, including administrative, janitorial, food services, and other critically important workers.

Data have shown that the widespread use of face masks could prevent tens of thousands of COVID-19 deaths, while other studies have shown universal mask wearing could save the U.S. economy [\\$1 trillion](#). Today, we know the benefits of widespread N95 respirator use would be even greater. According to [recent data](#), an N95 respirator provides the individual wearing it with at least 2.5 hours of protection against an unmasked person infected with the Omicron variant, compared to just 20 minutes of protection if they are wearing a cloth mask or 30 minutes if they are wearing a surgical mask.

To date, the coronavirus pandemic has infected over [60 million](#) Americans and killed more than 835,000. Congress has a responsibility to ensure families and workers have the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need to stay safe. At a time when the United States just this week reported a record-breaking [1.35 million](#) new coronavirus infections in one day – the highest daily total in the world – our government must step up and provide the public with high quality masks. The failure to address PPE shortages will continue to do lasting harm to vulnerable communities, and the entire country, by cutting off access to care in underserved areas. This would worsen the already deadly racial and ethnic health disparities in our country.

The Masks for All Act would also:

- Appropriate \$5 billion for domestic manufacturing, procurement, and N-95 respirator distribution
- Require the federal government to procure masks at a reasonable price
- Deliver masks to households via the U.S. Postal Service
- Manufacture and deliver masks in a variety of sizes, including for children, to ensure proper fit
- Package masks with information on the importance of wearing and proper use of masks
- Require weekly progress reports to Congress on use of funds and actions undertaken to eliminate mask shortages