

# *Florida governor bans mask mandates, blames immigrants and Biden for COVID surge*

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Tallahassee, August 6 (RHC)-- The U.S. state of Florida continues to set new records for hospitalizations and deaths, accounting for about one in five U.S. COVID-19 cases.

Despite the surge of coronavirus cases in Florida, Republican Governor Ron DeSantis has threatened to withhold funds to school districts that defy his ban on mask mandates and other health measures.

On Wednesday, DeSantis blamed immigrants and President Biden for Florida's COVID surge. He told reporters: "So, why don't you do your job? Why don't you get this border secure? And until you do that, I don't want to hear a blip about COVID from you."

At least four Florida school districts have moved to flout Governor DeSantis's statewide ban on mask mandates. But Broward County said Wednesday it was reversing its mask mandate under pressure from the governor. Broward County Mayor Steven Geller said: "Unfortunately, Dade and Broward County lead the nation in new hospitalizations. ... The numbers are doubling every 10 or 11 days. Geometric progression. This is horrifying."

In Houston, Mayor Sylvester Turner has renewed a mask order for city employees, defying a Texas ban on mask mandates. Republican Governor Greg Abbott has threatened to defund schools that require masks.

Meanwhile, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is expected to soon seek a presidential waiver to make COVID-19 vaccines mandatory for all active-duty soldiers.

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