

## Importance of COVID-19 Testing in Schools Template

**Headline:** [insert state/district] has government provided funds available to support COVID-19 testing

It's been over a year since COVID-19 began sweeping its way through the United States, putting millions out of work, shutting down businesses and closing schools. There's no doubt the pandemic has affected all Americans, but most would argue, our youth has been hit especially hard on multiple fronts – a breakdown of routine, social isolation and learning interruptions as a result of the unprecedented shift to remote learning. However, teachers, school staff and administrators worked tirelessly to reduce those effects by providing high quality education despite the circumstances and impact on their lives. With the school year on the horizon, actions must be taken to ensure we don't return back to how things were and keep children in the classroom.

While vaccinations continue to help put the worst of COVID-19 behind us, that does not mean that public health measures can relax yet. The critical vaccination threshold for herd immunity, 70%, has not yet been reached in the United States, which means that infected people can still spread the virus. This group of people who can become infected creates space for new variants to emerge, with increasing transmissibility and even the possibility of eluding the protection offered by current vaccines. Worse, this type of coronavirus is too new for us to know whether the protection offered by previous infection or vaccines is lifelong or requires periodic boosting.

Because of these realities, COVID-19 testing needs to remain an important public health measure, and schools are a particularly important site for testing. If schools do indeed go back to looking like they did before the pandemic, without masks and social distancing, testing programs could be used to help keep schools open by monitoring the spread of the virus and identify those who are infected early on. We urge [insert state/district] to invest today in regular testing and stay ahead of an outbreak.

Luckily, testing in K-12 schools is supported by government funds, making it more affordable. As of now, [insert state] has [insert amount of funds available per [HHS.org](https://www.hhs.gov)] available to use for school testing programs and we strongly recommend you leverage it. It's time we innovate how we use testing – as a way to keep kids in schools, not out of them. For [insert your senator and/or representatives] the message is clear: your commitment to allocating those funds toward COVID-19 testing in schools is essential to protecting the future of our nation, our youth, from the detrimental effects of this disease.

We appreciate your immediate attention,

[NAME]

[TITLE, Affiliate or component name]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]