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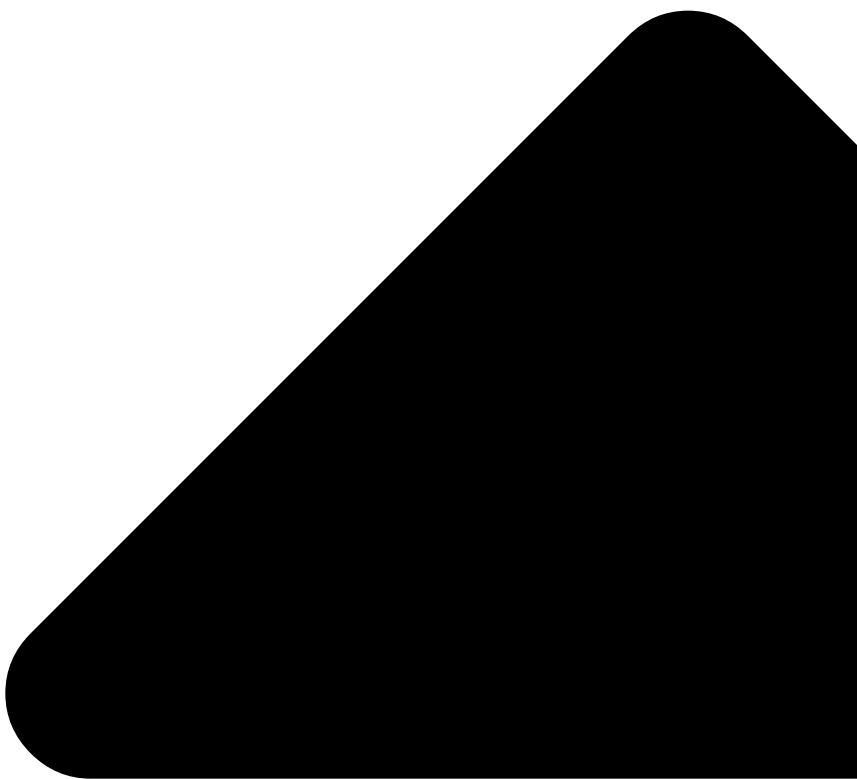
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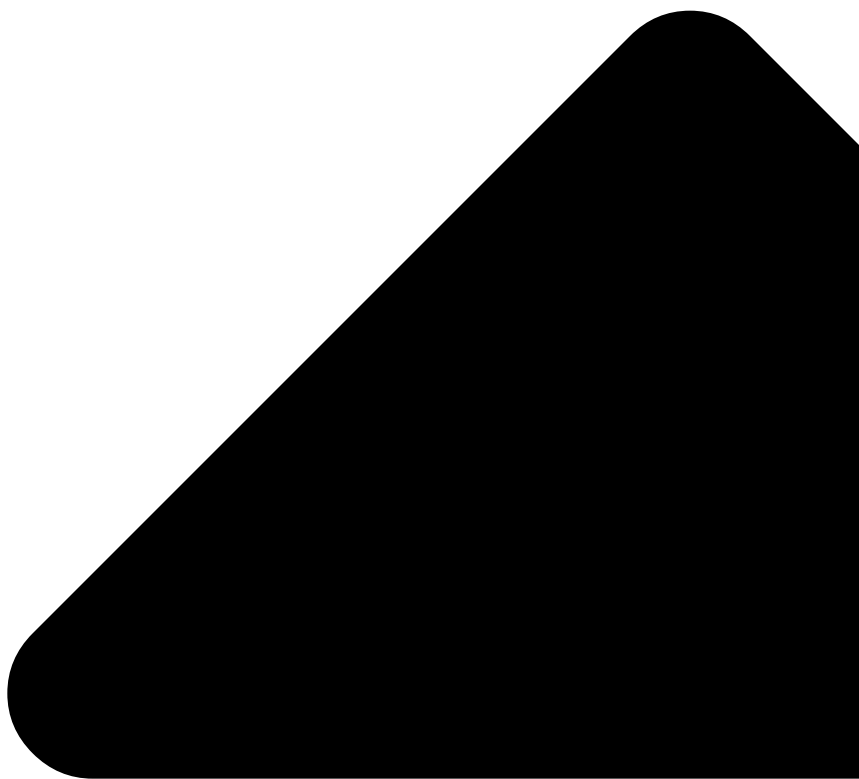
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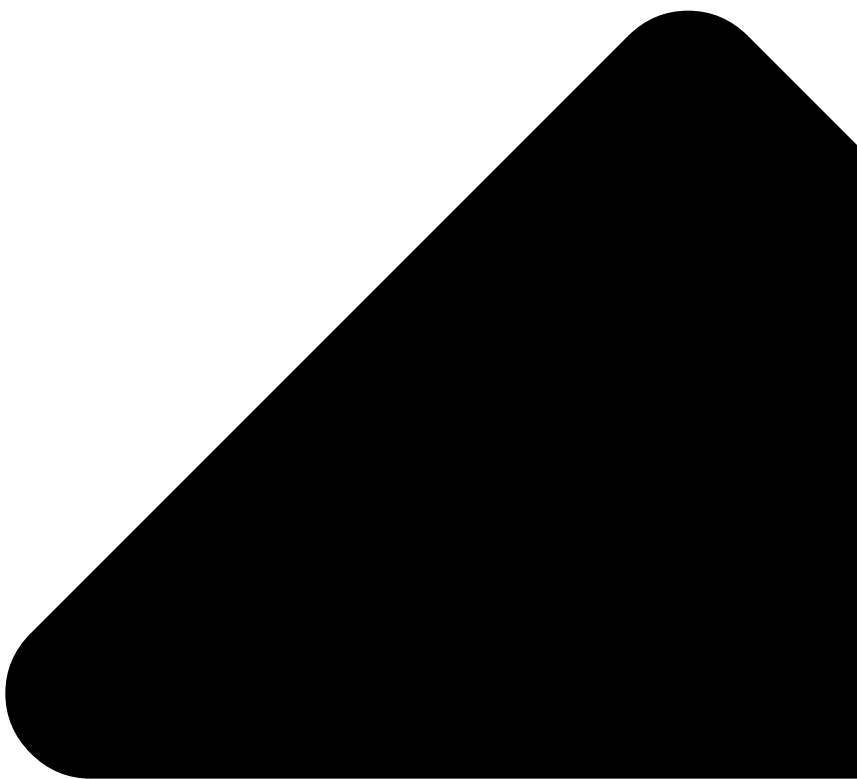
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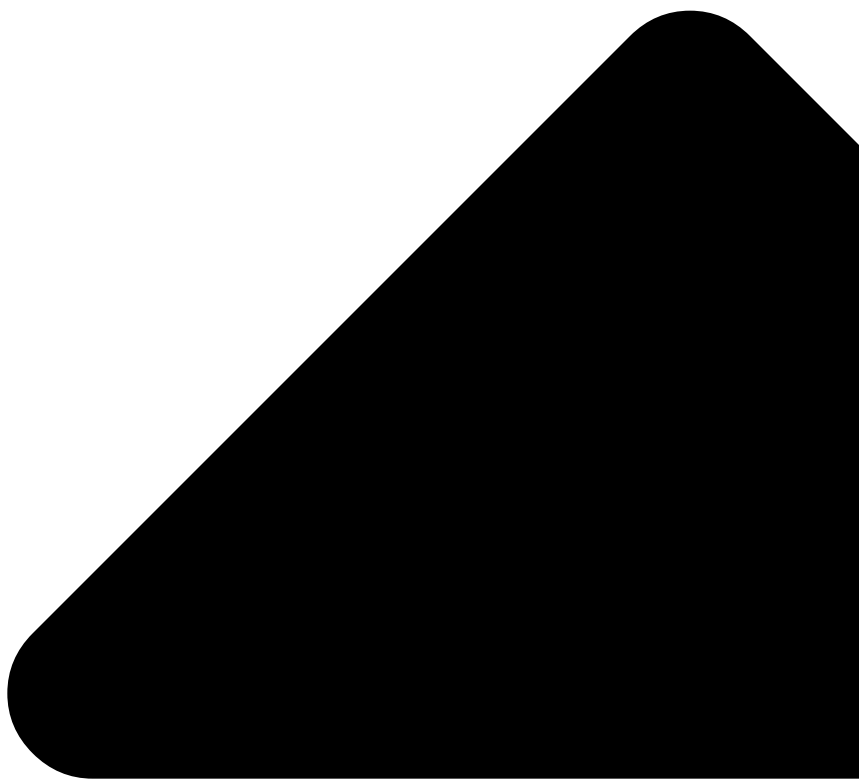


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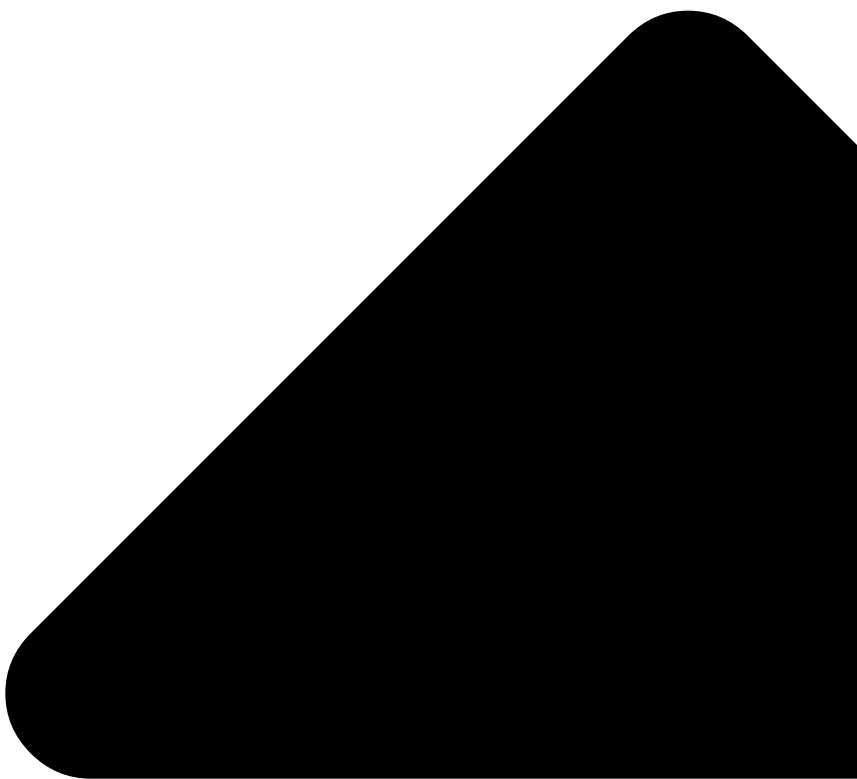
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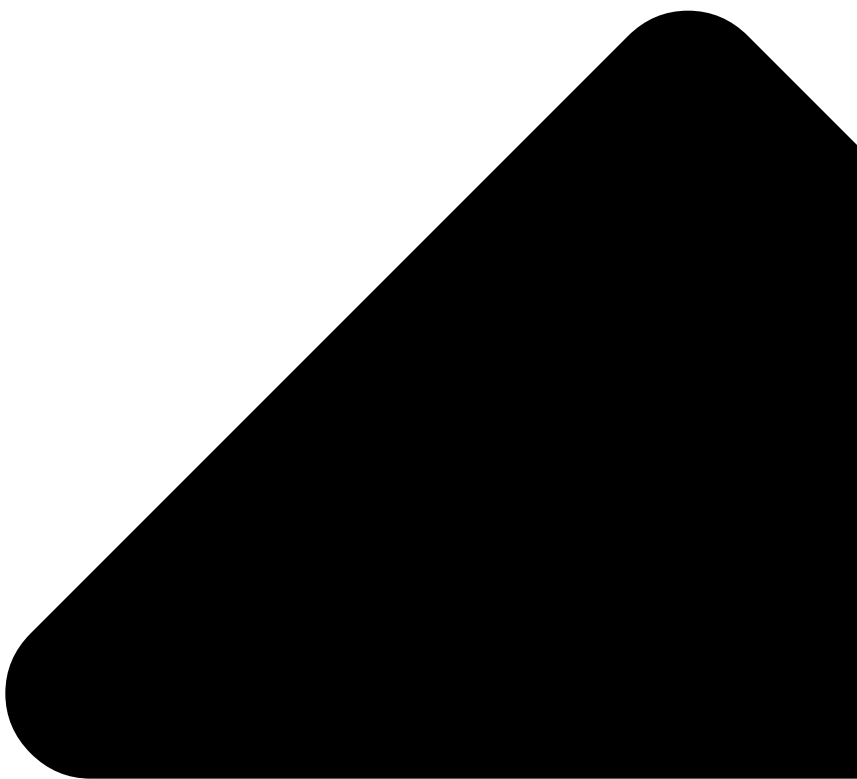
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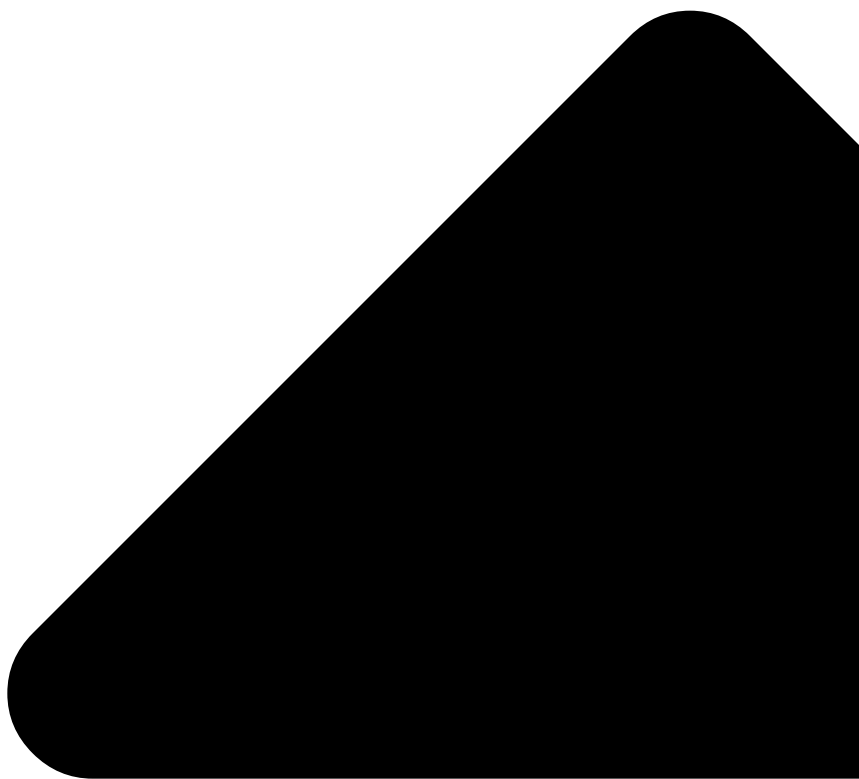
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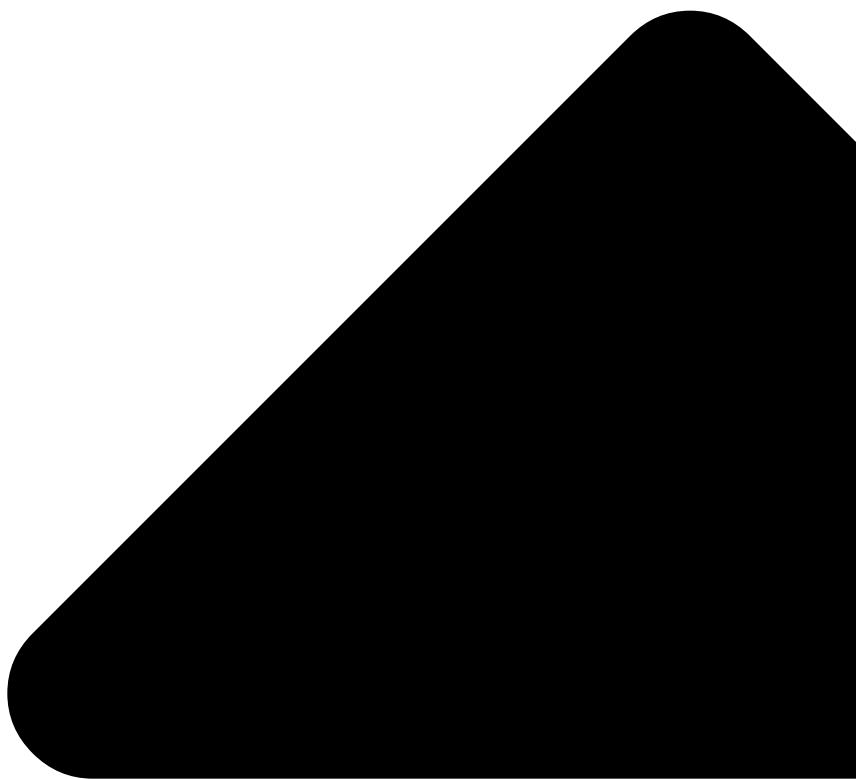
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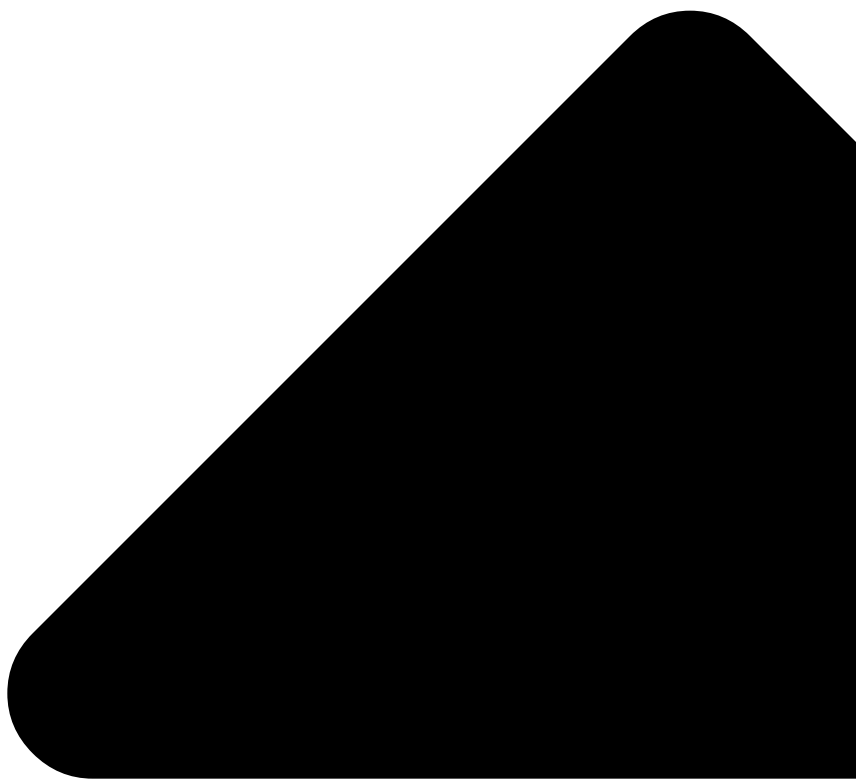


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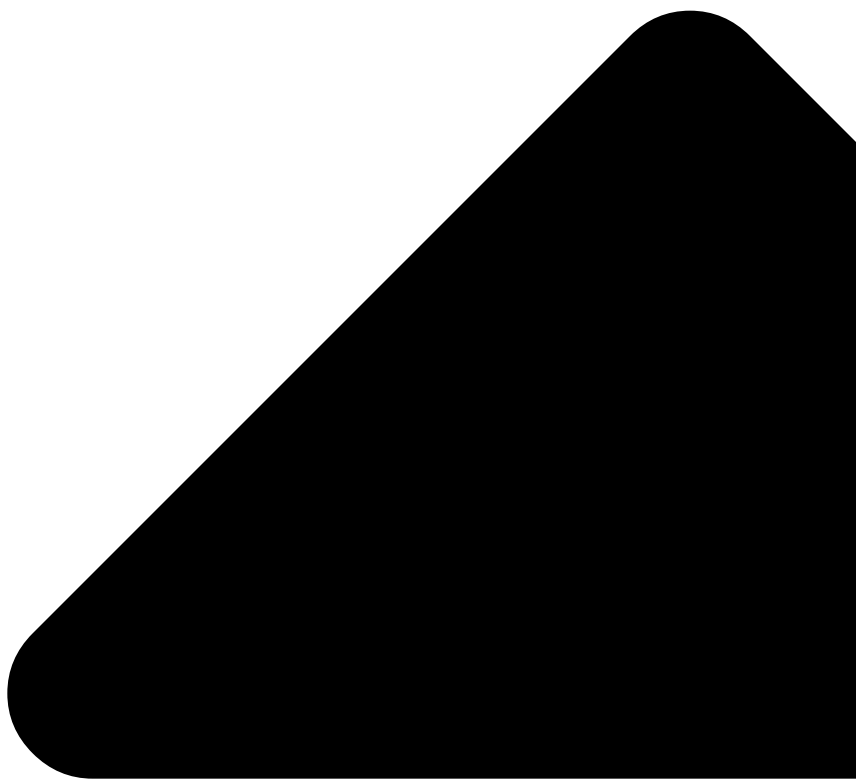
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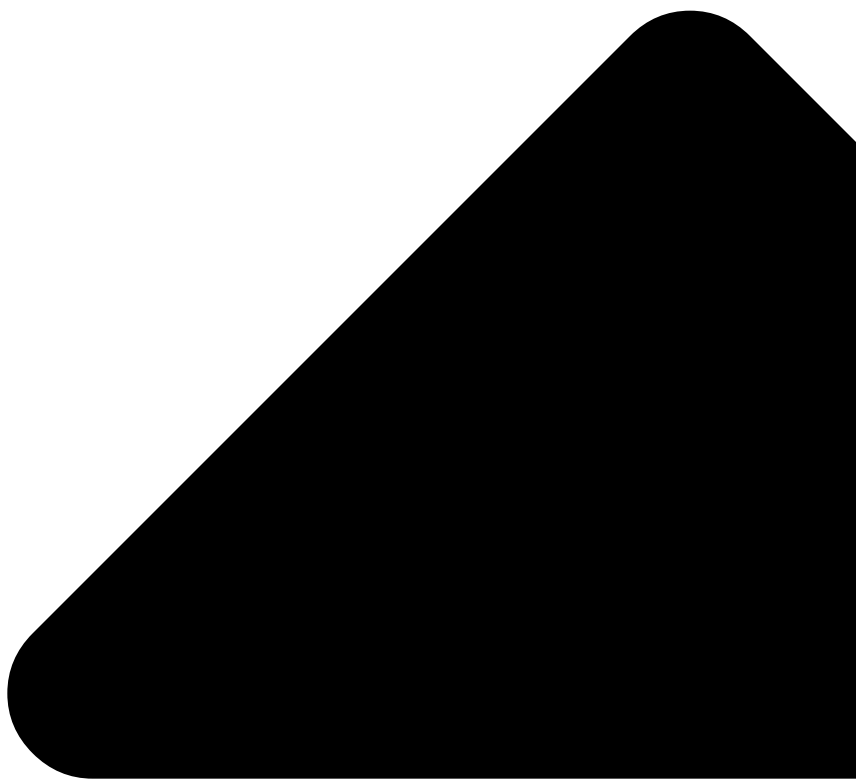
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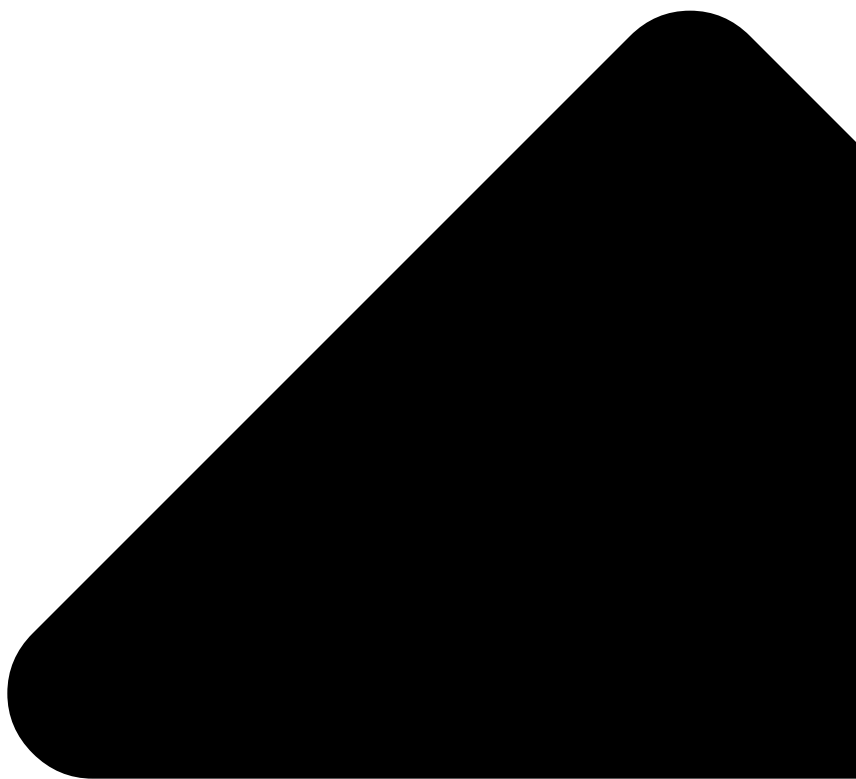
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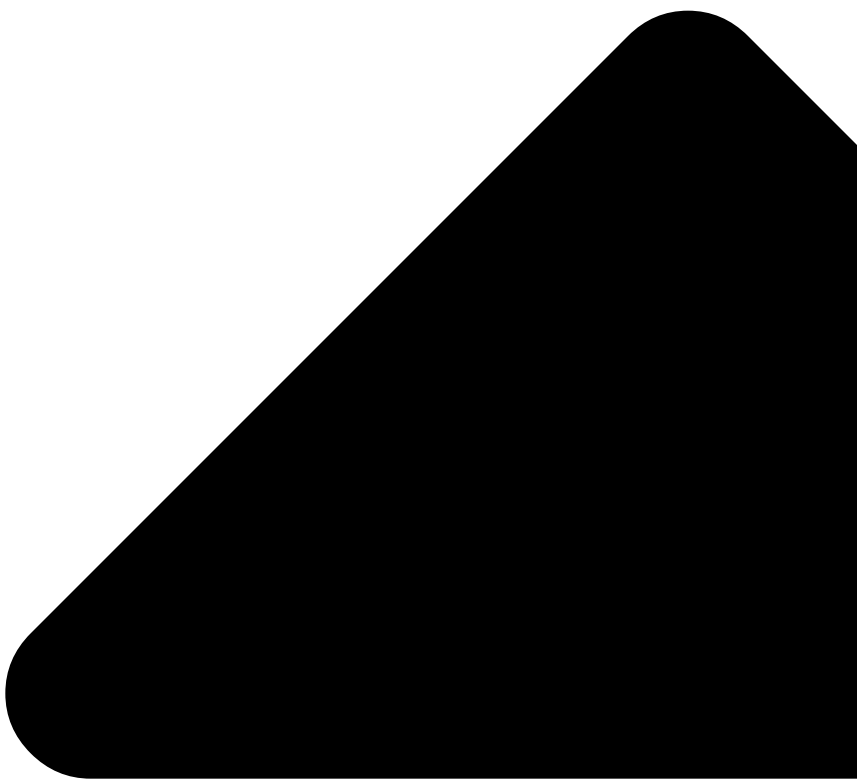
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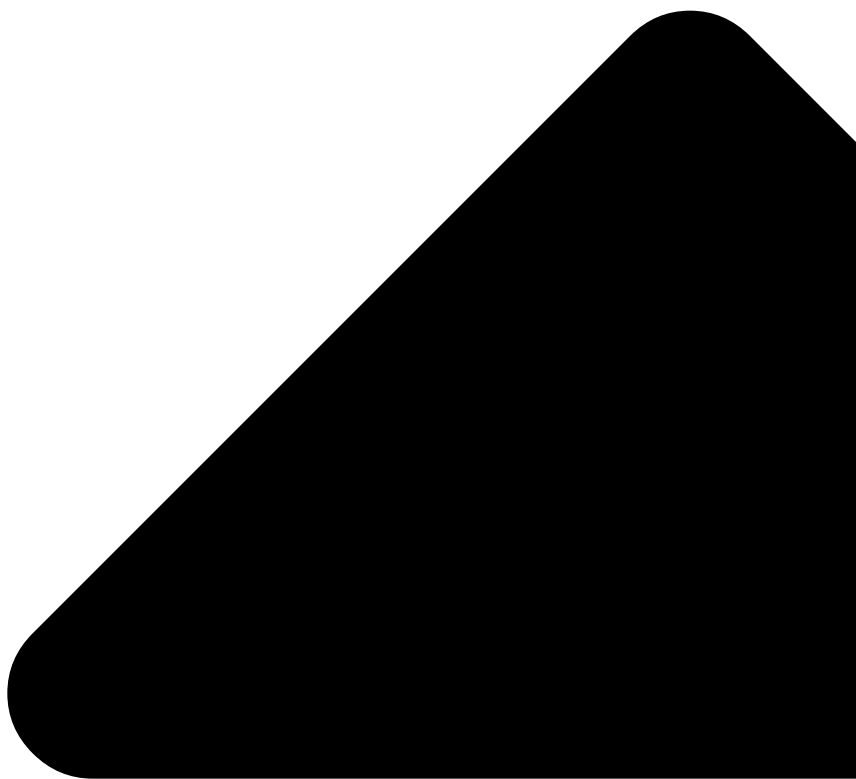
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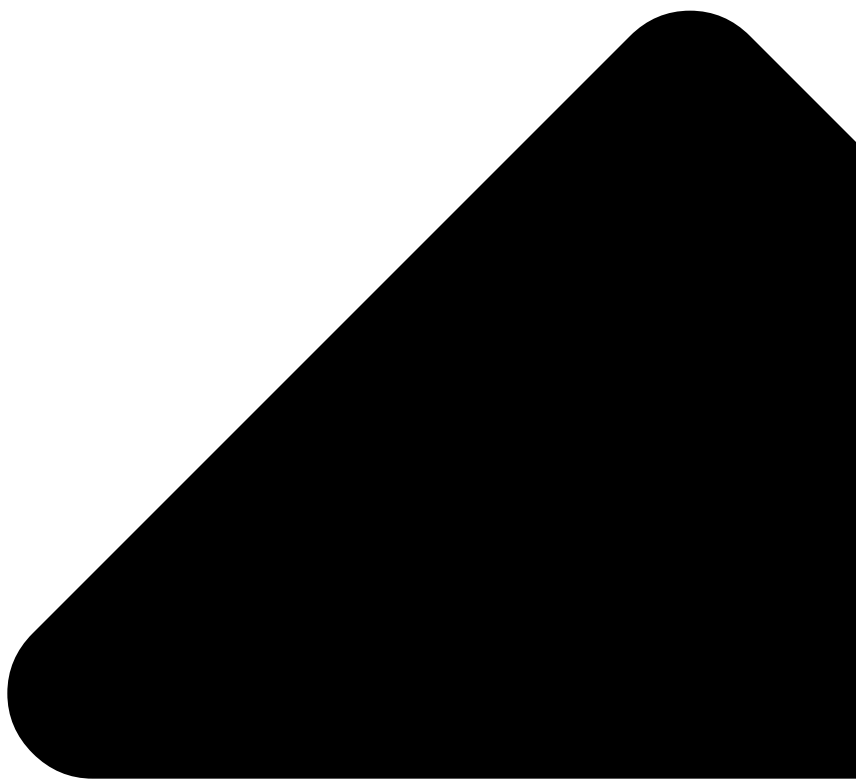
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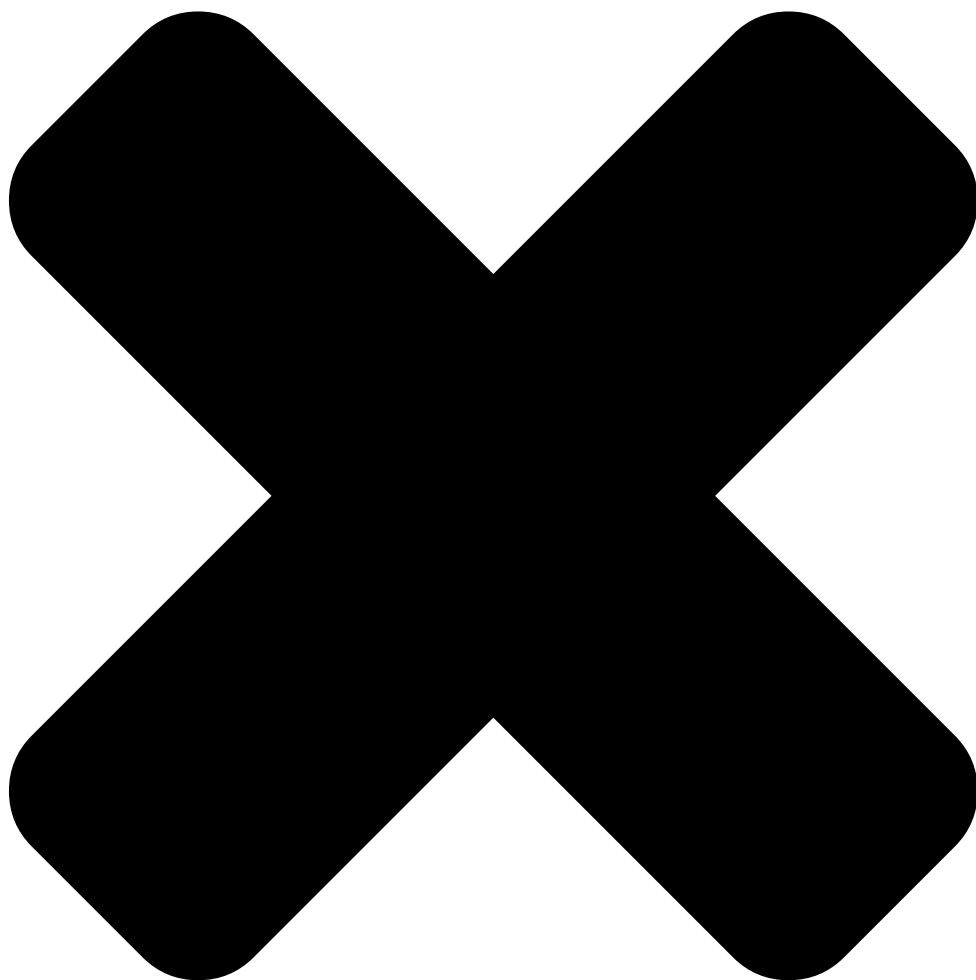
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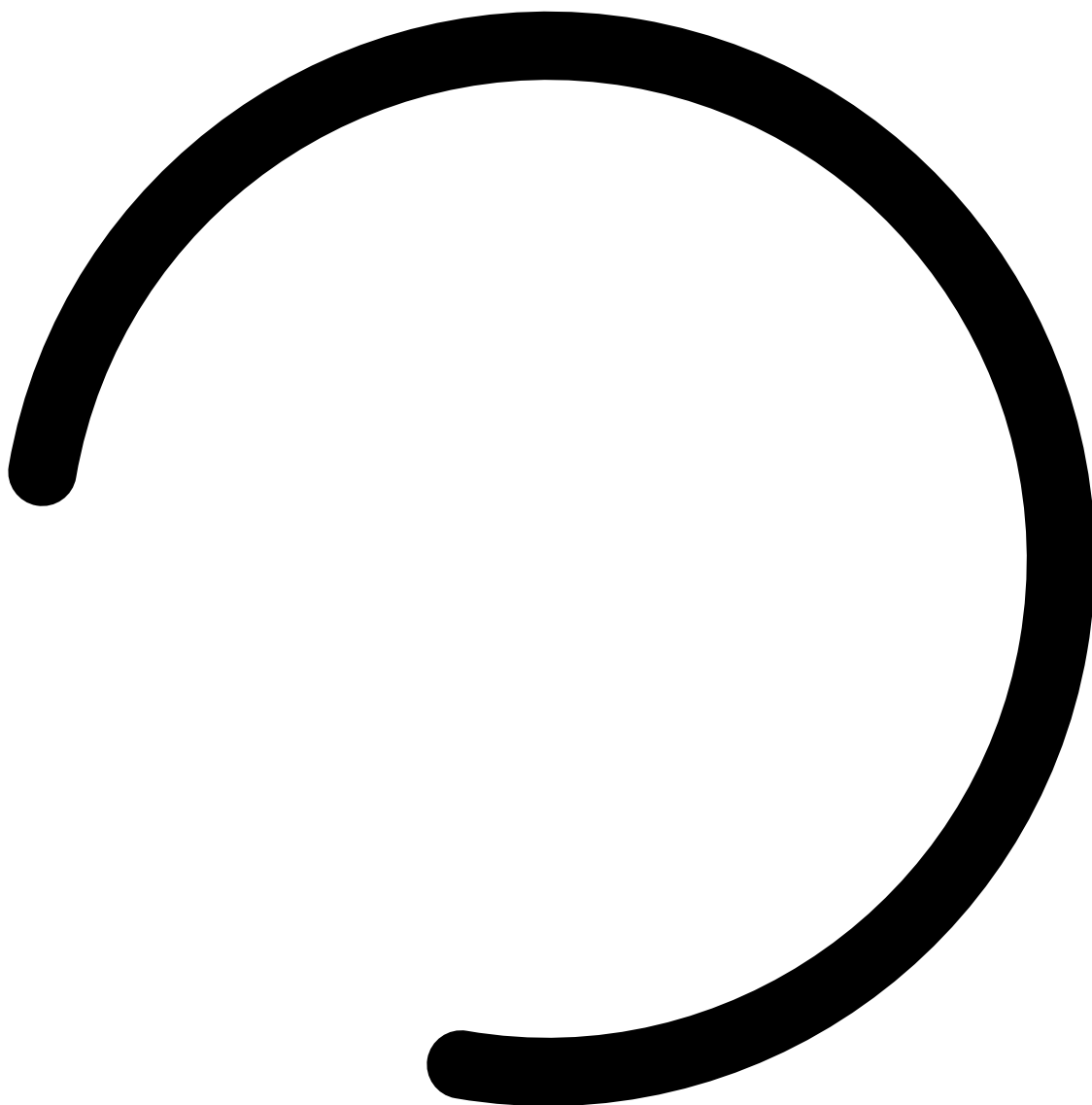
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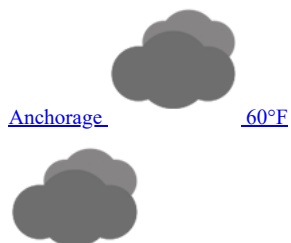




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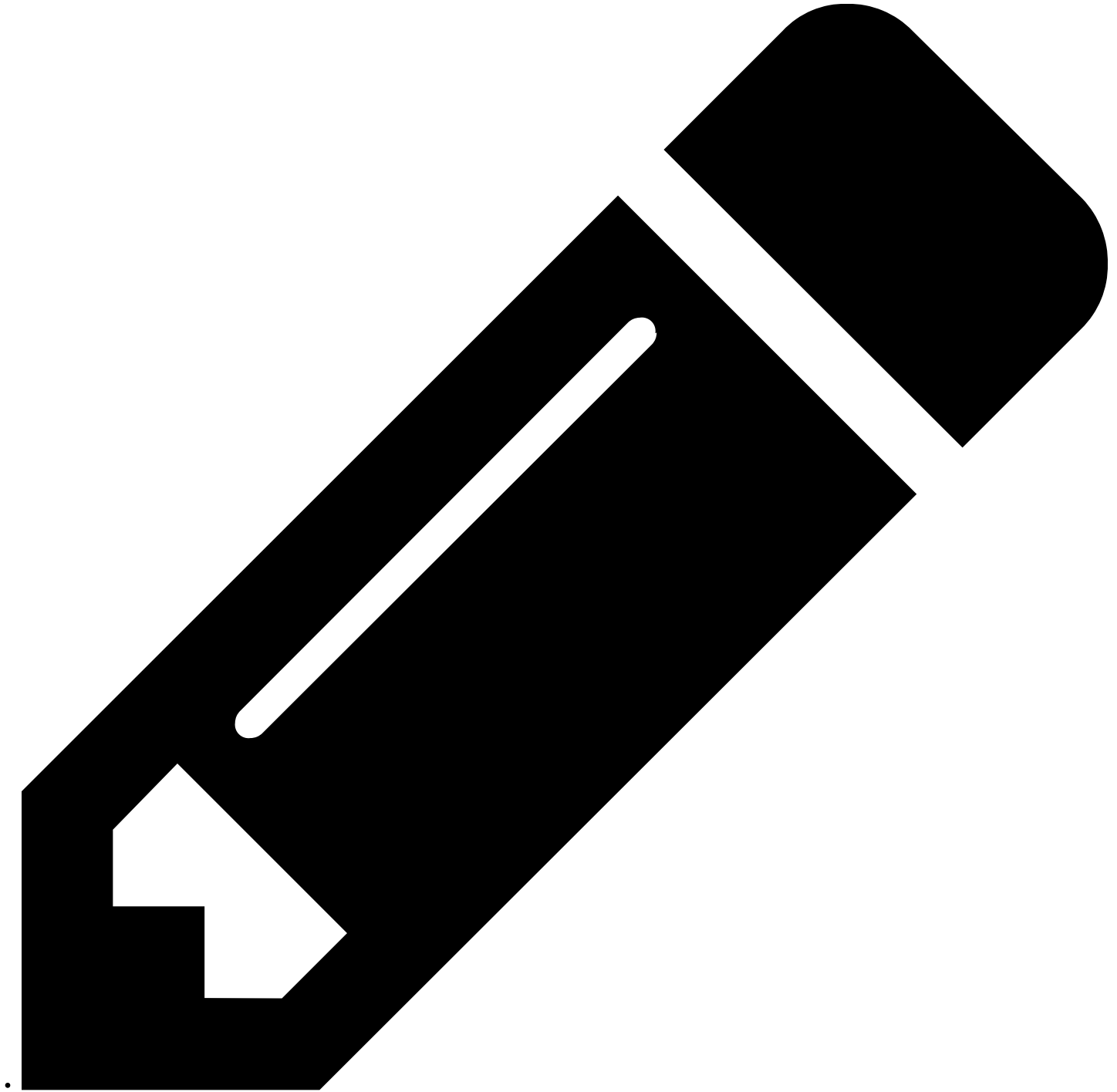


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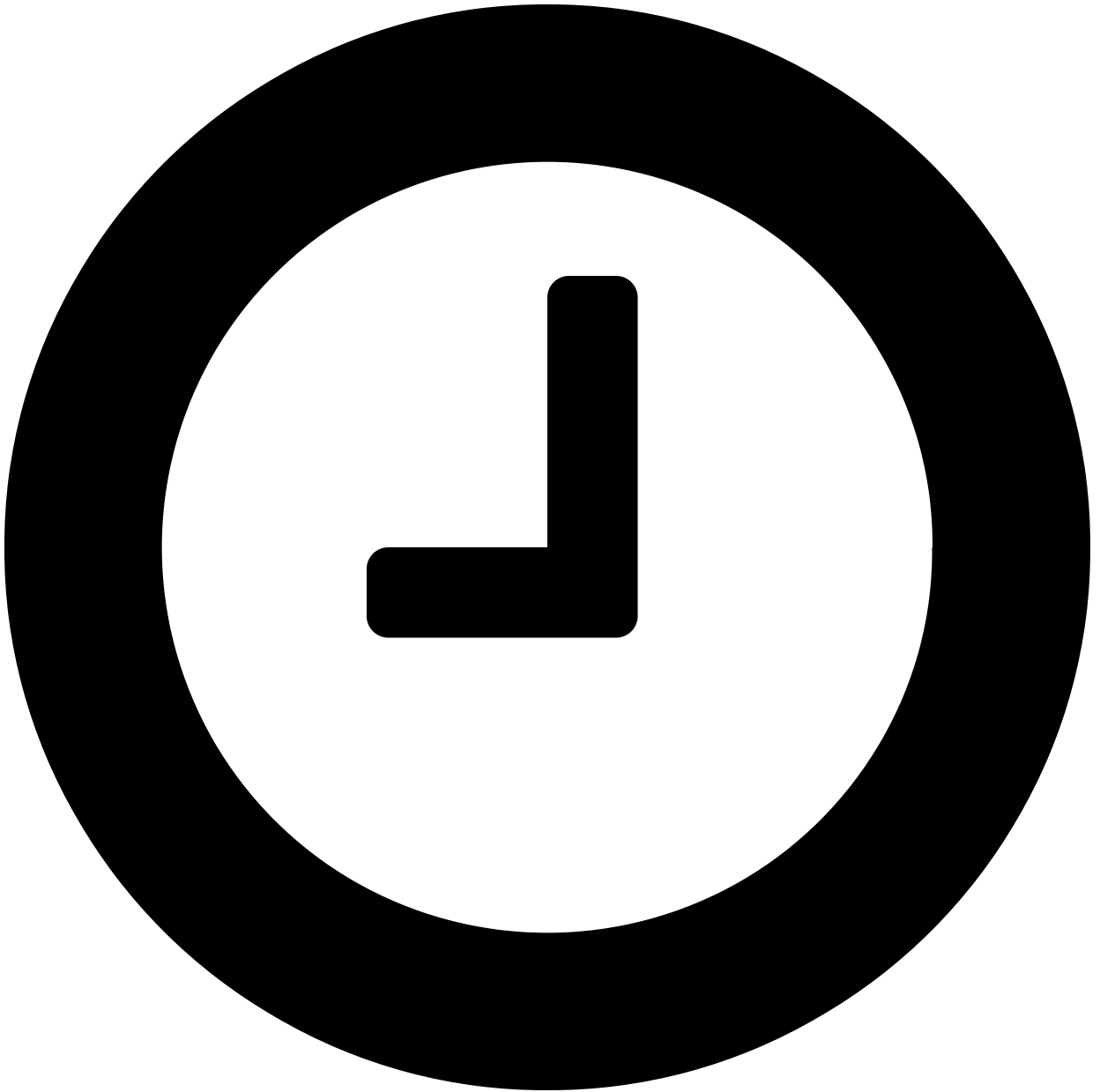
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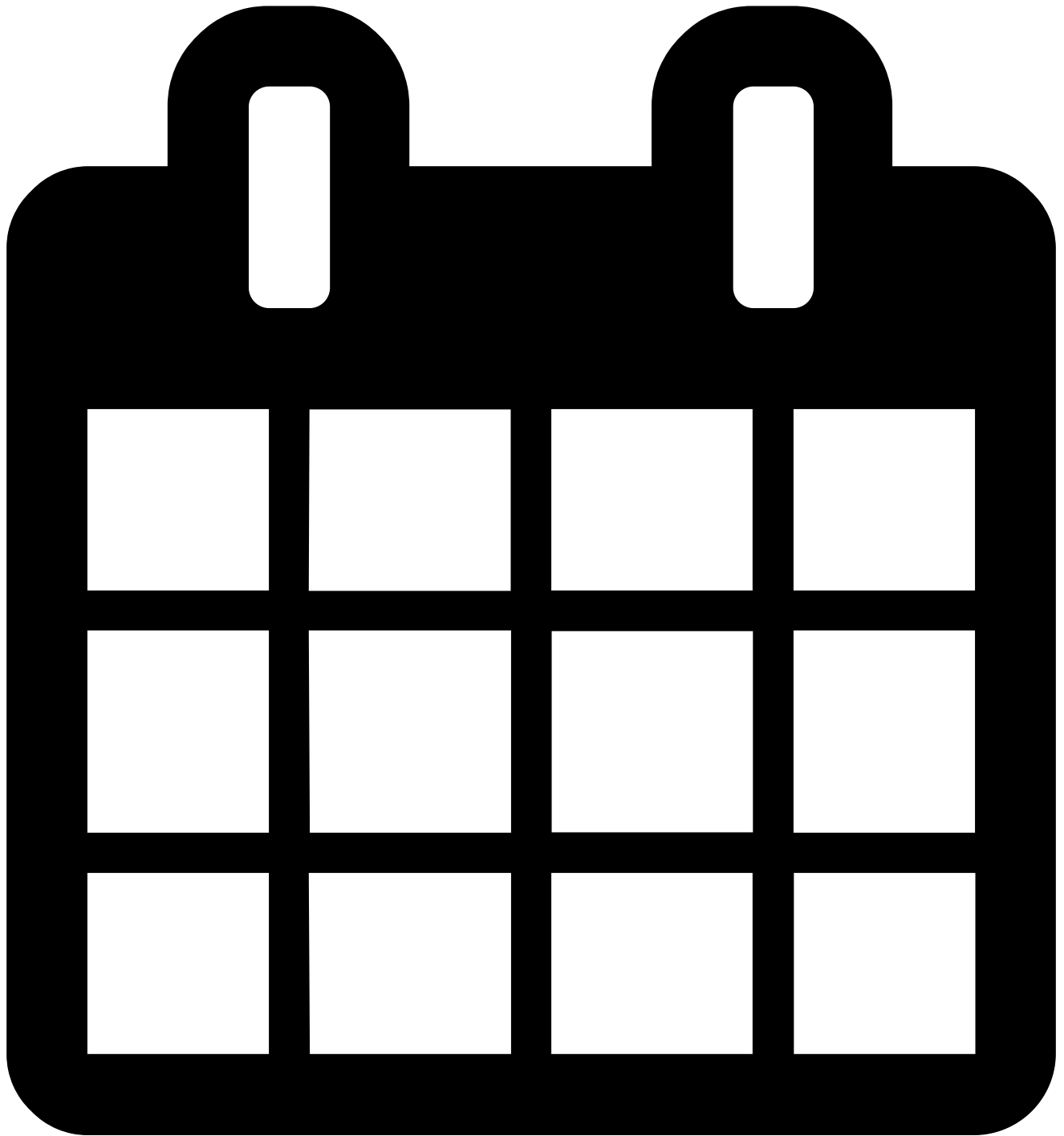
Anchorage School Board backs school district's plan to require masks



• Author: [Samantha Davenport](#)



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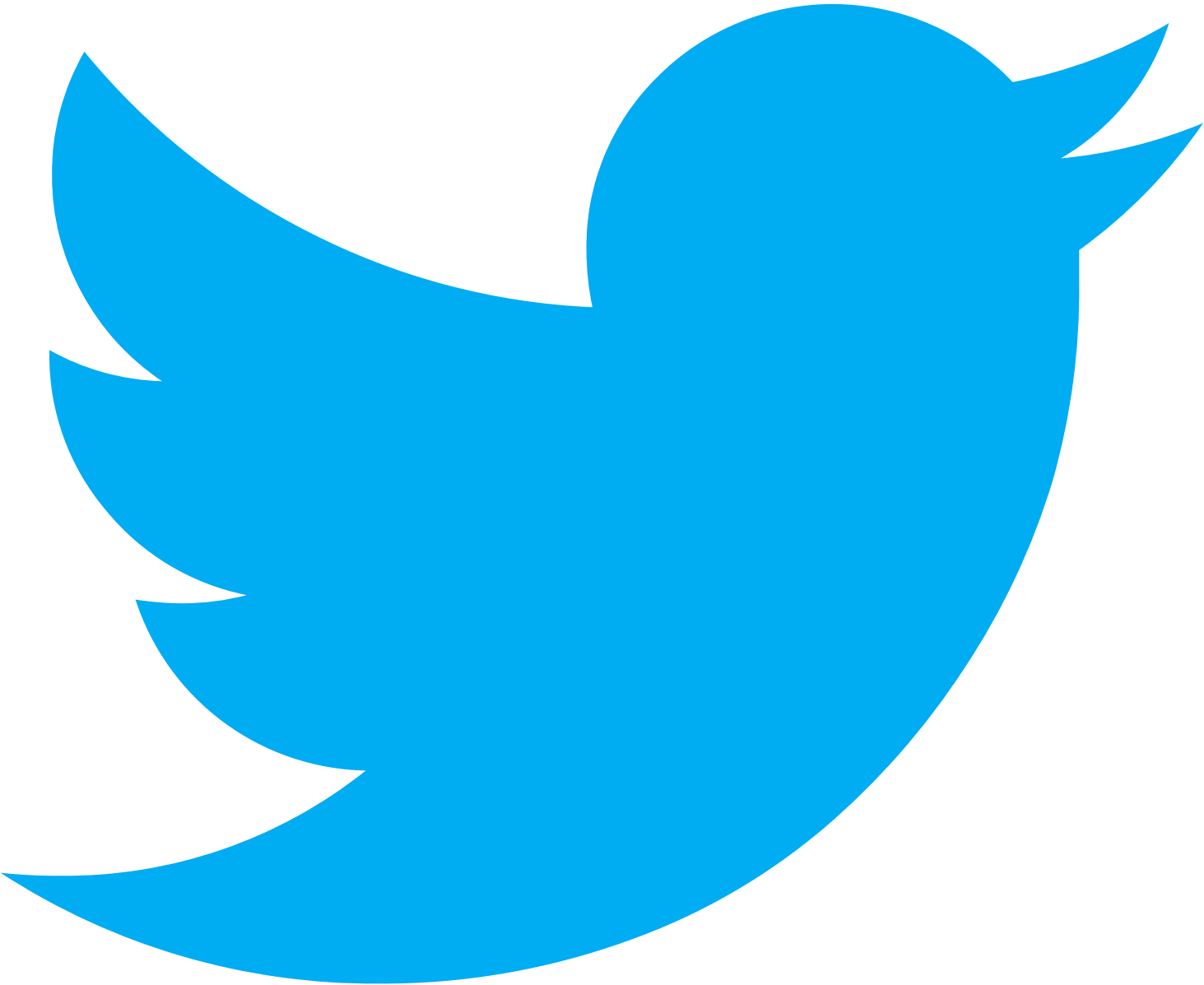
 [Anchorage School District Superintendent Deena Bishop and School Board President Margo Bellamy listen to public testimony on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. \(Bill Roth / ADN\)](#)

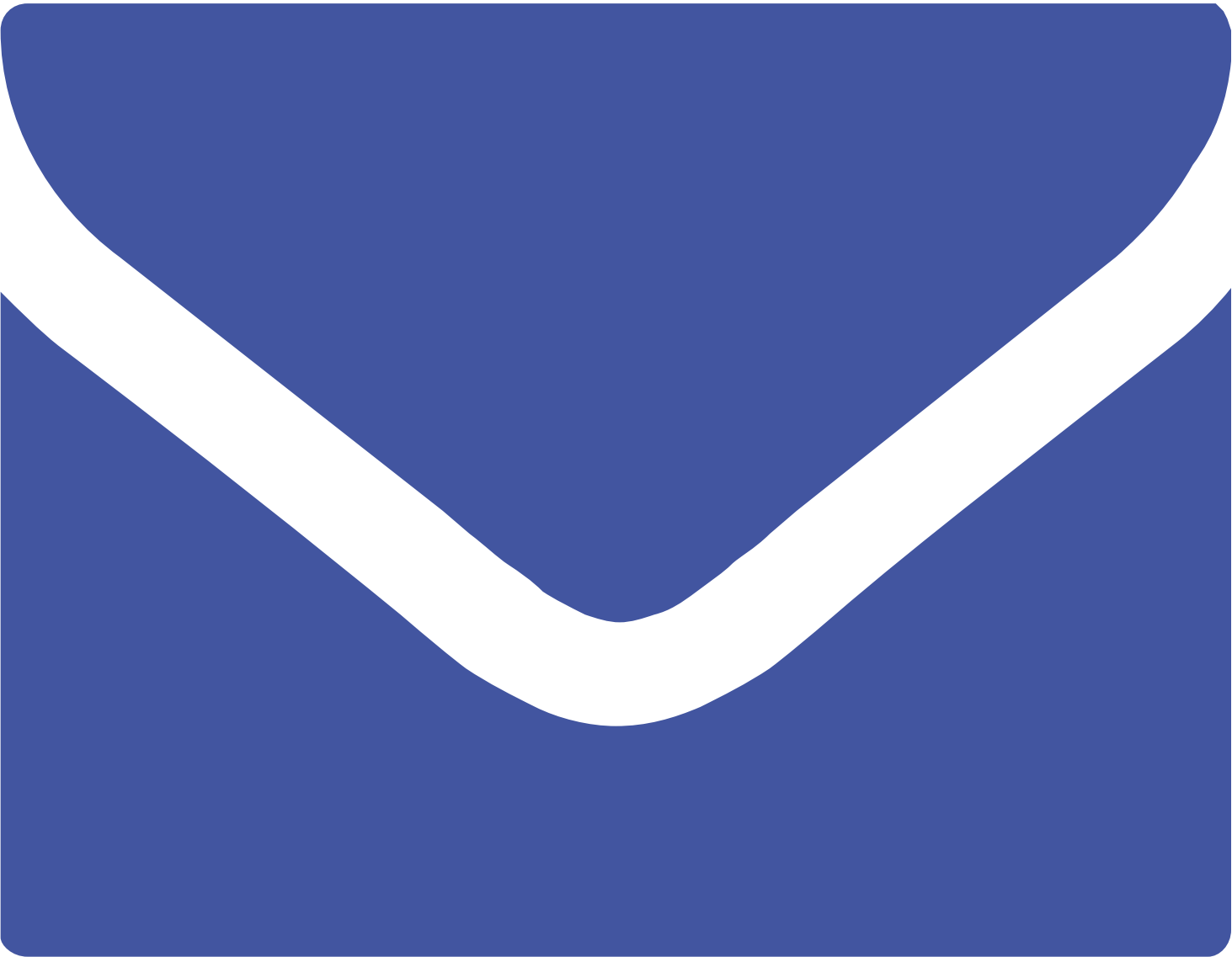
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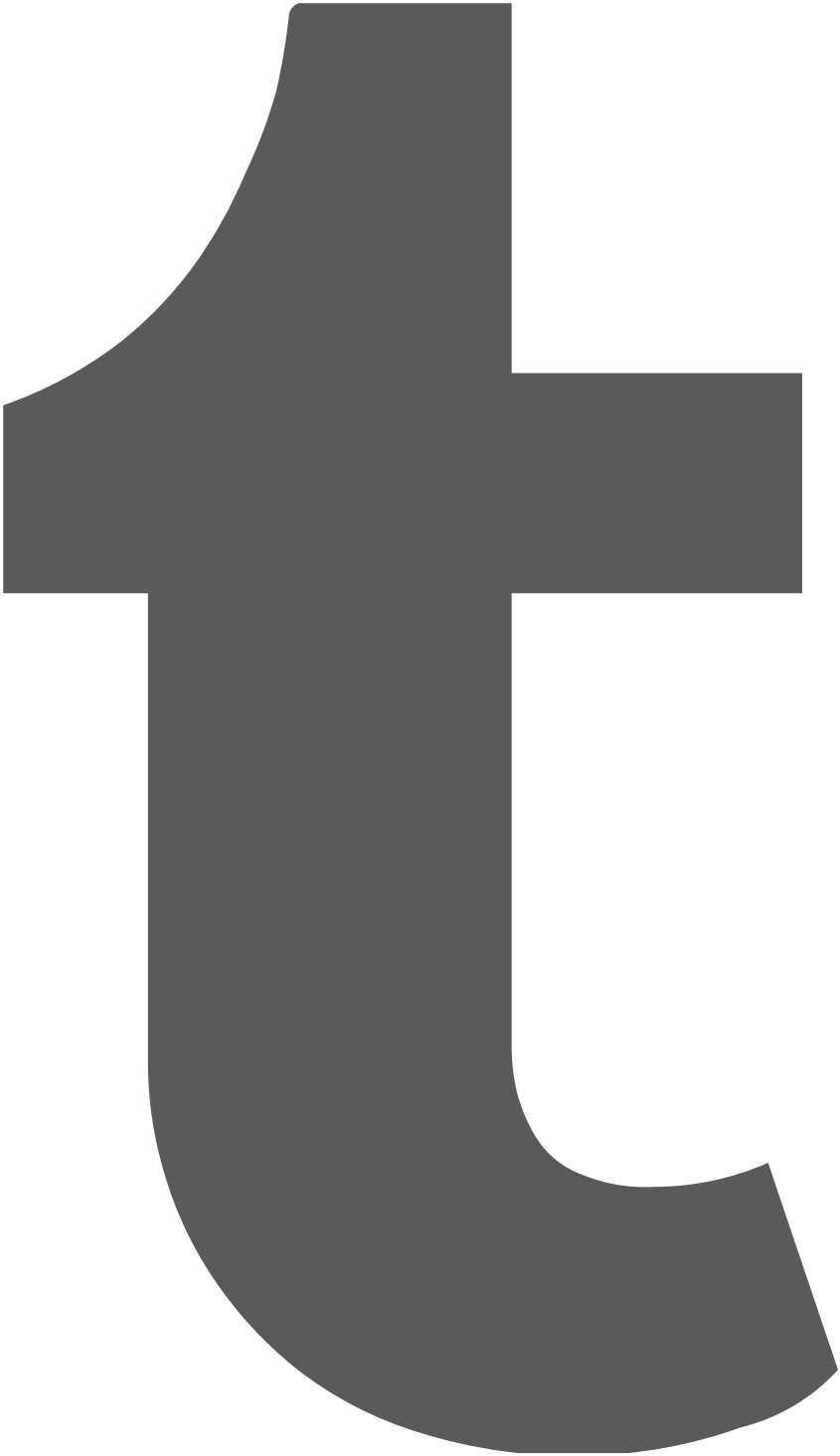
Anchorage School District Superintendent Deena Bishop and School Board President Margo Bellamy listen to public testimony on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. (Bill Roth / ADN)

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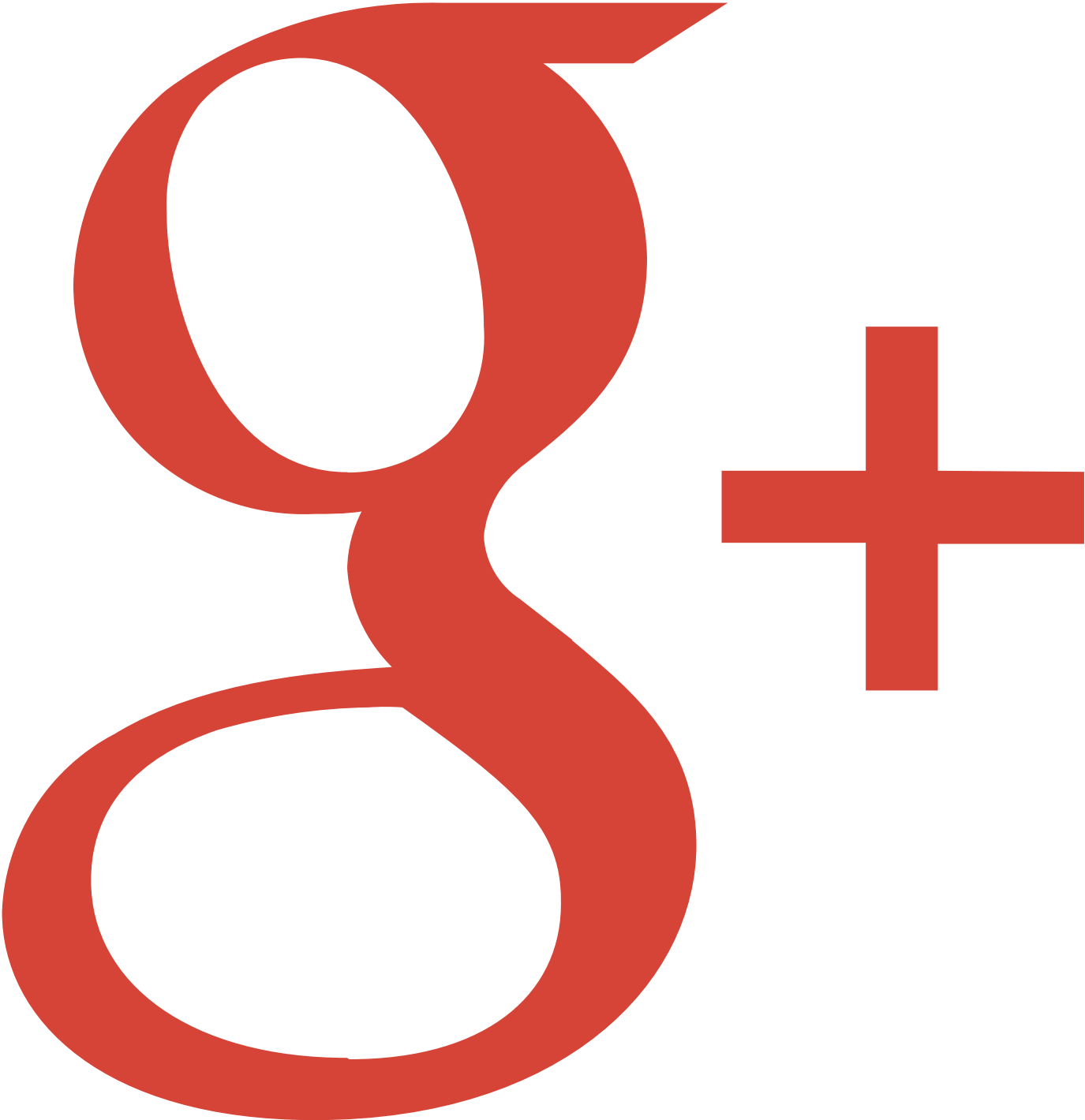


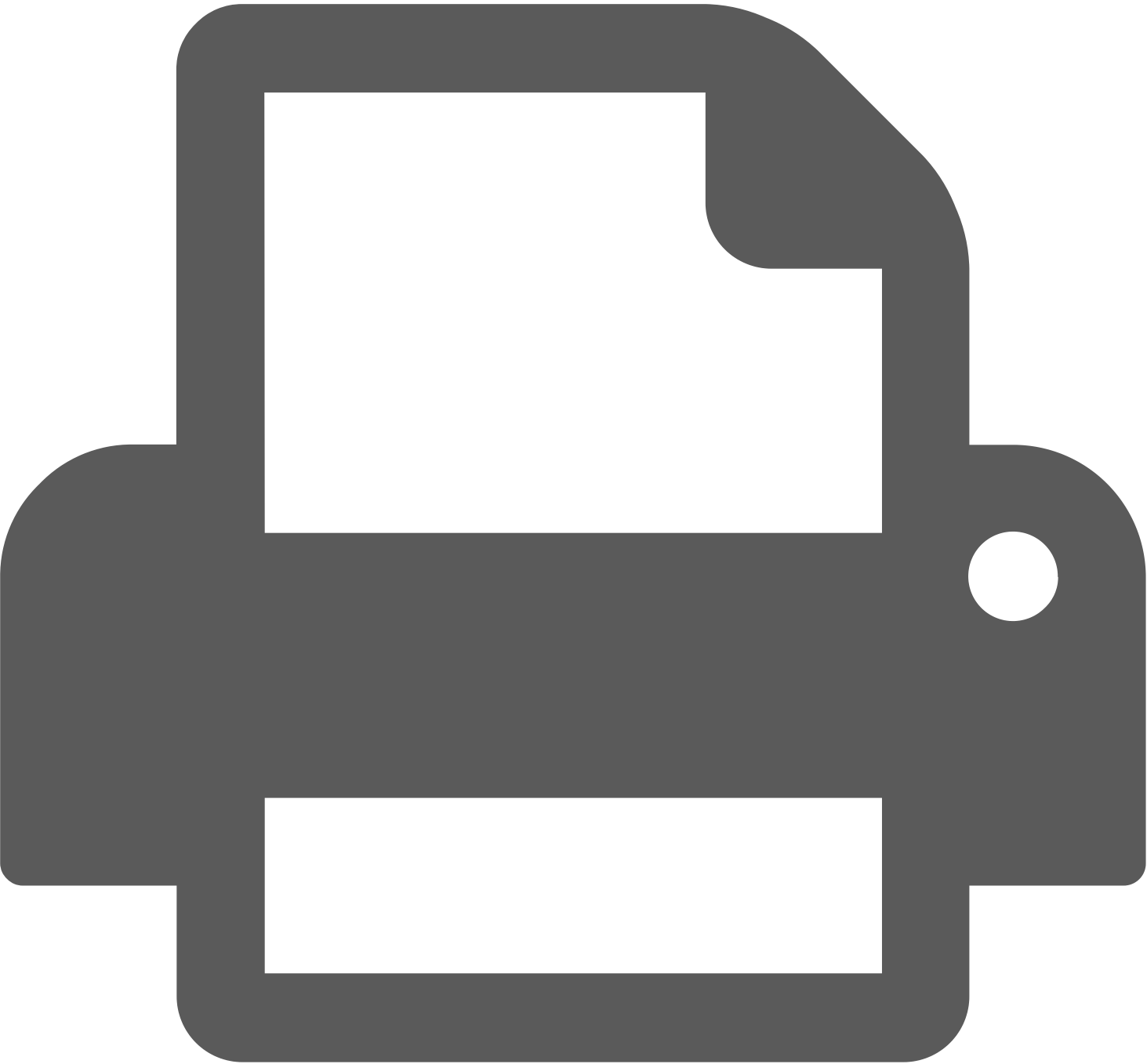












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The Anchorage School Board on Tuesday accepted the school district's plan to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 for the upcoming school year, which includes a requirement for students and staff to wear masks indoors.

The [mitigation plan](#), announced by Superintendent Deena Bishop on Saturday, will go into effect on Aug. 9. With few exceptions, masks will be required for all people inside Anchorage School District buildings, and will be optional outdoors. The district will also continue regularly cleaning classrooms, buses and other facilities. Bishop in her announcement cited both the rise of COVID-19 cases in Anchorage and the delta variant as reasons for the plan.

Most classes begin on Aug. 18.

The school board heard hours of testimony from parents, staff and students at Tuesday's meeting, much of which was anti-mask, although a number of people spoke in support of wearing them. More than 85 people testified, according to School Board President Margo Bellamy.

Attempts from board member Dave Donley to amend the school district's COVID-19 mitigation plan and ease mask requirements failed. Donley moved that the board amend the plan to continue with its current summer school mask policy, under which masks have been optional. That motion did not receive a second from another board member.

Donley also moved to amend the guidelines to allow optional mask-wearing for kindergarten and first-graders; that motion also did not receive a second from another board member.

[\[COVID-19 hospitalizations hold steady as Alaska reports 307 new cases and 2 deaths on Tuesday\]](#)

Board member Pat Higgins said his obligation is with the safety of children. He said two of his grandchildren had COVID-19.

“When I see my grandkids sick, it affects me a lot,” Higgins said.

[People protest against universal masking in schools this fall prior to the Anchorage School Board meeting on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. \(Bill Roth / ADN\)](#)
[People protest against universal masking in schools this fall prior to the Anchorage School Board meeting on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. \(Bill Roth / ADN\)](#)
[People protest against universal masking in schools this fall prior to the Anchorage School Board meeting on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. \(Bill Roth / ADN\)](#)
People protest against universal masking in schools this fall prior to the Anchorage School Board meeting on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. (Bill Roth / ADN)

The school board suspended its rules to hear more testimony from the public as parents and community members filled the ASD Education Center. The majority expressed frustration with the mask requirement.

Sarah Price, a senior at Eagle River High School, said she feels anxiety when she wears a mask.

“Let the parents and students finally choose,” Price said.

Others testified in support of masks, including student Kennedy Grady.

“I think it’s necessary to keep us safe, because our health shouldn’t be political in the first place,” Grady said.

This is a developing story. Check back for updates.

About this Author

[Samantha Davenport](#)

Samantha Davenport is an education and general assignment reporter for the Daily News. She previously wrote and edited for KTVA 11 News. Contact her at sdavenport@adn.com.

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