



July 31, 2020

The Honorable Chris Sununu
Governor of New Hampshire
State House
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: The urgent need to protect New Hampshire citizens and visitors with a face covering mandate

Dear Governor Sununu,

We write in support of the Portsmouth City Council's recent letter to you, requesting that your office issue an immediate statewide mandate regarding the use of protective face coverings

In May the City Council of Portsmouth established a Citizen Response Task Force (CRTF) of 21 Portsmouth residents charged with "...addressing the needs of re-opening, within the confines of health care advisories." The Task Force has formed three subcommittees including the undersigned Health Subcommittee. Our Subcommittee is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council via the CRTF based on our assessment of emerging scientific and clinical information on COVID-19 and the pandemic. Members bring their education, experience and expertise in medicine, pharmacy and nursing to the assignment. Portsmouth's City Health Officer is an advisory member.

Succinctly, *we write emphatically to endorse the City Council request that you issue a mandate requiring all to wear appropriate face coverings in public where social distancing is difficult.* Such a mandate would elevate public awareness regarding masks and physical distancing guidelines already recommended by you and the State Epidemiologist via public service announcements, social media and other platforms.

The benefits of using protective face coverings are well documented by the CDC and the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services. We appreciate the vocal support and example provided by you as Governor. However, the lack of a clear statewide mandate results in inconsistency and tension in business and public settings. With surging infections in other parts of the country and the high level of tourism in New Hampshire, our progress toward meeting the challenges of this profoundly serious pandemic is threatened.

City of Portsmouth, City Hall, One Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH 03801

As “The City of the Open Door,” Portsmouth welcomes visitors from many places. Our local and state economies rely on activity generated from tourism to the Seacoast. In order to protect the health of businesses, employees, first responders, schools and residents, we need clear, protective measures immediately.

The majority of states in our Union now have in place mandates regarding protective face coverings, enacted by Republican and Democratic governors alike. New Hampshire is a notable exception, and an outlier in the Northeast. The wearing of protective face coverings should be mandated by you, our Governor, for the good of Portsmouth and New Hampshire.

Please recognize the urgency of this appeal by acting immediately and decisively.

Respectfully,

Ann Birner

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Bianca Monteiro, MD, FCCP

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Kim McNamara, MS, BS, REHS, City Health Officer, City of Portsmouth

Citizen Response Task Force, Health Subcommittee

Acting on the authority of the Portsmouth City Manager as directed by City Council