



Minnesota Hospital Association

2550 University Ave. W., Suite 350-S
St. Paul, MN 55114-1900

phone: (651) 641-1121; fax: (651) 659-1477
toll-free: (800) 462-5393; www.mnhospitals.org

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Via email: tim.walz@state.mn.us

Governor Tim Walz
State of Minnesota
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Ste. 130
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

Dear Gov. Walz:

As we watch the COVID-19 case counts, positivity rates and hospitalizations increase throughout the country, there are actions we must take now to avoid that same surge hitting us.

First, we sincerely thank you for your leadership, and we thank Minnesotans for their sacrifices in March, April and May to stay home to stay safe. Those efforts bought hospitals and health systems significant time to put in place surge plans that included additional hospital capacity and personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep our workforce safe. Our health care heroes have done an exemplary job of preparing and caring for patients. We have experienced the devastating toll that COVID-19 takes on our patients and their families: lengthy hospital stays, attacks on the body's organs and long recoveries. At points, several Twin Cities hospitals were nearing ICU capacity. We are trying new therapies to treat COVID patients. We have done all this while reengineering our health systems with e-visits to ensure we can serve our patients in this new normal.

We appreciate that hospitalizations are currently down. This is allowing us to care for other patients who deferred care because of COVID-19. But we also know that the positivity rate and case counts are increasing again in the state.

On July 14, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -- after reviewing the latest science -- reaffirmed that cloth face masks are a critical tool in controlling the spread of COVID-19, especially when used *universally* within communities. We know that asymptomatic people can spread the virus. We know that masks help prevent people from spreading the virus to others. This knowledge is especially important when we factor in the 3.3 million adults nationwide age 65 or older living in a household with school-age children.

In addition, as testing delays and testing supplies continue to challenge providers in being able to do widespread, timely testing, masking is an even more important tool. We have to assume many more people have the virus than we know.

We have a narrow window of time to slow the spread of the virus, so we are asking you to mandate the wearing of face masks statewide as soon as possible. We will stand with you in asking Minnesotans to again come together to support and protect our health care heroes, our family members -- including our children and grandparents -- and our communities by wearing a mask.

Taking this action universally, rather than city by city or business by business, is important. If all Minnesotans double down and wear masks every time we are in public indoor places and outside when we cannot be physically distant from others, we can continue to flatten Minnesota's curve and avoid the overwhelming hot spots and surges we are seeing in other states.

For five months, our health care heroes have come to work and suited up behind tight-fitting and hot PPE, including face masks. We know that asking Minnesotans to mask up in summer is hot, uncomfortable and unfamiliar. But this small act by every Minnesotan supports us and protects others while we navigate learning to live with this virus until there is a vaccine. We want our kids to go back to school. We want our businesses open to support our economy. We want to safely do the activities that bring some normalcy to our lives. Masking up is how we can do this. Thank you again for your continued strong partnership with hospitals and health systems.

Sincerely,

R. Koranne.

Rahul Koranne, M.D., MBA, FACP
President and CEO

c: Commissioner Jan Malcolm, jan.malcolm@state.mn.us
Chris Schmitter, Chief of Staff, chris.schmitter@state.mn.us