

I am contacting you today to respectfully request that you do not support mandating the use of masks in our community.

Evidence regarding the use of face coverings made from fabric is inconclusive and the potential exists that the use of a mask, especially for long periods of time may be harmful.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and even local public health departments have changed their position on the use of face coverings multiple times in recent months; however, at this time, they are supporting the use of masks despite a lack of evidence that fabric face coverings can prevent the transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

A rapid review of the available literature on the use of fabric face coverings conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and published on April 8th, 2020 concluded that:¹

“There is little evidence regarding the transmission of small aerosolized particulates of the size potentially exhaled by asymptomatic or presymptomatic individuals with COVID-19. The extent of any protection will depend on how the masks are made and used. It will also depend on how mask use affects users’ other precautionary behaviors, including their use of better masks, when those become widely available. Those behavioral effects may undermine or enhance homemade fabric masks’ overall effect on public health. The current level of benefit, if any, is not possible to assess.”

A recent meta-analysis on the use of face mask within a community setting on the reduction of viral respiratory infections concluded the evidence to be equivocal at best.² Even the U.S. Surgeon General has previously stated publicly that masks are not effective in preventing the public from catching the coronavirus.

Harms associated with the use of fabric masks include the reduction of tissue and blood oxygenation and the increase in carbon dioxide levels. Detoxification is also hindered by the reduction of oxygenation which can impair the immune system and cause additional psychological and physical issues. The use of cloth masks has also been found to increase the risk of infection and the spread of viral illnesses.³

The use of cloth masks is particularly concerning given that individuals may lack the resources or the knowledge to ensure that these coverings are adequately cleaned and sanitized between uses.

Health conditions can also prevent individuals from wearing masks and if mandated to wear one, their use could cause severe harm in this subset of the population. This includes persons with respiratory diseases such as asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), or emphysema; persons with neurological disorders such as Alzheimer’s Disease, dementia, or autism spectrum disorders; and persons with past trauma experiences or who suffer from behavioral or emotional disorders.

Persons may experience undue hardships from mask mandates which include:

- Being denied access to necessities such as food, medicine, or even health care
- Loss of wages or employment should an employer refuse to accept a person's reason for not wearing a mask
- Requiring people to compromise their own personal safety and well-being to access public spaces in a free society
- Financial hardships related to fines associated with violation of mask mandates. This is particularly problematic for persons of lower economic status, and among many Wisconsinites who have suffered considerable financial losses resulting from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Local law enforcement officers should not be forced to police the use of masks as this would impede their ability to adequately support more important safety roles within our communities.

I urge you to allow community members to make personal health choices that are best suited for themselves and their families. One sized-fits-all policies, especially those which come with bullying, shaming, exclusion from society, and fines, should not be tolerated in a free society.

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. [Rapid Expert Consultation on the Effectiveness of Fabric Masks for the COVID-19 Pandemic \(April 8, 2020\)](https://doi.org/10.17226/25776). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25776>.

² Olga Perski, David Simons, Robert West, Susan Michie. (2020). [Face masks to prevent community transmission of viral respiratory infections: A rapid evidence review using Bayesian analysis](https://doi.org/10.32388/1SC5L4). Qeios. doi:10.32388/1SC5L4.

³ MacIntyre CR, Seale H, Dung TC, et al [A cluster randomised trial of cloth masks compared with medical masks in healthcare workers](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-006577) BMJ Open 2015;5:e006577. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2014-006577