

July 2, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC, 20050

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor, State of Maryland
Chair
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol St NW #267
Washington, DC 20001

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor, State of New York
Vice Chair
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol St NW #267
Washington, DC 2000

Dear President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Governors Hogan and Cuomo,

The medical evidence is clear: the wearing of masks or face coverings in public settings, especially when it is not possible to consistently maintain social distancing, is a critical element to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Regrettably, in recent weeks we have seen evidence that in some areas where there is growing community spread, issuing voluntary guidance on masks is insufficient to protect public health. Absent stronger measures to prevent transmission, communities across America risk another round of shutdowns, broad restrictions on non-essential activities, and irreparable economic harm.

Current local and state mandatory mask requirements vary widely in scope, application, and enforcement. For example, there is variation on whether the mandate applies to all businesses, to just employees or also customers, and exemptions for age or other health conditions (e.g. asthma). In addition, in some locations the mandate is imposed on businesses for them to enforce. Not only has this led to public confusion and lower levels of consumer confidence, but it has also contributed to confrontations between customers and employees and litigation from both directions -- enforcing mask requirements and failing to enforce mask requirements.

For the sake of public health and our economy, we request that the White House Coronavirus Task Force and the National Governors Association work together to:

1. Establish guidance on the appropriate metrics (e.g. positive tests, hospitalizations) for imposing location-based mandatory mask requirements in all public spaces;
2. Develop model mandatory mask policies that are simple and do not impose the enforcement burden on organizations without such expertise, such as businesses and non-profits; and
3. Make clear that businesses and non-profits will not be held liable for refusing entry or services to an individual who is not complying with face covering requirements.

To be clear, the decision to impose face covering requirements should remain at the state or local level but be informed by clear and consistent guidance based on data. We believe that a national mask standard, implemented locally, offers the surest way to protect public health and promote economic recovery.

Across the country, the business community is stepping up to not only manufacture masks, but also to distribute them free of charge, and to promote the wearing of face coverings. We stand ready to continue to work in partnership with government at all levels to combat this pandemic and support our economy.

Respectfully,

Thomas J. Donohue
CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Joshua Bolten
President & CEO
Business Roundtable

Jay Timmons
President & CEO
National Association of Manufacturers

Matthew Shay
President & CEO
National Retail Federation

Susan K. Neely
President & CEO
American Council of Life Insurers

Glenn Hamer
President & CEO
Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Chair, Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100

Anne Forristall Luke
President & CEO, U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association
Chair, Council of Manufacturing Associations

cc:
The Members of the United States Congress
National Association of Counties
National League of Cities
United States Conference of Mayors