

Debra Thompson

From: lynch1@gci.net
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 11:31 AM
To: Assembly
Cc: Mark Jensen; Jeffrey Meucci; Bob Lynn; David Kensinger; Taylor Norheim; Jeigh Stanton Gregor; Chelsea Tremblay
Subject: Brian Lynch comments on Petersburg Health mandates #8 and #9, Agenda items 15-E and 15-F
Attachments: Vanderbilt COVID19 Report-Oct 27.pdf

Dear Mayor and Assembly Members,

I apologize for the lateness of this letter, but I was out of town and did not get it composed until just now.

I urge you to pass both tonight's agenda items 15 E and F, Petersburg Health Mandates #8 and #9, respectively.

Although I urge passage of these mandates, I find it distressing that it is necessary to do so in this community. While Petersburg has been lucky so far in avoiding a Covid-19 outbreak, Alaska, as well as the rest of the country is now into an extremely dangerous phase of this pandemic and likely the worst is yet to come. Unfortunately, to assure our continued safety and to avoid another lockdown, these steps are necessary. They are necessary because, while many here are following CDC guidelines by wearing face coverings and exercising social distancing, there are also many folks in our community who are under the misguided and misinformed notion that face coverings are a threat to their personal freedom and liberty or are ineffective, or that the pandemic is hoax. None of which are true.

Face coverings are no more a threat to personal freedom than currently existing traffic laws such as speed limits, stop signs and DUI laws. They are public safety laws that are primarily implemented to protect others from irresponsible actions on your part that are an existential threat to the safety of your fellow citizens. We, well at least most of us, take these laws for granted, realize their basic purpose, and obey them for the good of the order. Face coverings during a pandemic are also public safety actions or laws. They protect your family, friends, community, and fellow citizens from becoming infected by you. Regardless of the outcome of this face covering mandate, the choice to wear a face covering or not is the choice between if you want to be a good citizen and or not. It is that simple. The only notion of freedom associated with that choice is the freedom of others to not become sick because of the actions of a selfish few. Not wearing a mask during a pandemic is not a patriotic act, it is, in fact, antithetical to patriotism because patriotism includes devotion to one's country and fellow citizens.

For the argument that face coverings do not work I have attached a recent Vanderbilt University study that demonstrated the effect of face covering mandates on hospitalizations in Tennessee. Here is the link https://www.vumc.org/health-policy/sites/default/files/public_files/Vanderbilt%20COVID19%20Report-Oct%2027.pdf. This study established that the rate of Covid-19 hospitalizations was significantly reduced in counties that had mask mandates over those that did not. The graphics presented in that study are stark and clearly demonstrate those findings. If you do not have time to read the entire study, I suggest you look at those graphs. To following is a quote from the study that also succinctly summarizes the findings. Keep in mind that this is about increases in hospitalizations, not an increase in positive cases that some seem to associate only with increased testing. ***Hospitals that predominantly serve patients from areas without masking requirements (the <25% group) continue to see the highest rate of growth in hospitalizations. As the percentage of patients residing in mask-requirement counties increases, the growth curve "flattens," indicating much lower growth in hospitalizations. It is also clear that masking alone is not a silver bullet: since early October nearly every region of the state has seen growth in hospitalizations. Again, however, this growth has been most dramatic in hospitals that draw a large percentage of patients from areas without mask requirements.***

Another stark reminder of the effectiveness of masking and social distancing efforts/mandates occurred this past weekend. On Saturday, Alaska reported 745 new Covid-19 cases, while South Korea, a country with a population of approximately 52 million people, reported 150 new cases! Masks are universally worn in S. Korea, both indoors and outdoors. A country with 76 times the population had an infection rate 5 times less than Alaska! We can do better.

Again, I apologize for the lateness of this letter, but I hope you will consider my comments during this evening's deliberations.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Brian Lynch