

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 24, 2020

Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We write to urge you to implement an immediate statewide mask order requiring that all individuals wear a mask while in public in order to fight the spread of COVID-19. As positive cases surge and hospitalizations increase, it is imperative that you take data-driven action to help protect Floridians, our families, and our communities from the dangers of COVID-19. The recommendation by Florida Surgeon General Scott Rivkees that "all individuals in Florida should wear face coverings in any setting where social distancing is not possible" is evidence that wearing a mask in public is sound and necessary practice from a scientific perspective. You must take the next step and make it a requirement.

On Sunday, Florida added an additional 3,494 positive cases, the latest in what the South Florida Sun Sentinel aptly called an "explosive trend of people testing positive for the disease."¹ The state has reported more than 1,000 new cases each day since June 3rd, with the exception of only one day (June 8th),² and we have now marked the grim and unfortunate milestone of 100,000 cases in Florida.

The question of when and whether to wear a mask has taken on overt tones of political significance and must be irrelevant in the face of growing scientific evidence. Wearing masks assists in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and avoiding the individual, communal and national tragedies that result from its spread. Published in *The Lancet* on June 1st, an analysis of 172 separate studies that examined various interventions to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, SARS and MERS from an infected person to people close to them found that "mask wearing significantly reduces the risk of viral transmission."³ In addition, a German study looked at a town that adopted the use of face masks early in the pandemic, and found a decline in total infections, suggesting that using face coverings can reduce transmission by approximately 40 percent.⁴ Finally, a modeling study, published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society A, concluded that if the majority of a population wore face masks in public, even simply homemade face masks, transmission of the virus could be reduced dramatically and could help prevent additional waves of the pandemic.⁵

¹ <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/coronavirus/fl-ne-florida-coronavirus-deaths-cases-sunday-june-21-20200621-ip5gtnpbrrakrmxolxwoyt2vlu-story.html>

² <https://www.local10.com/news/local/2020/06/22/florida-coronavirus-cases-will-hit-100000-mark-monday/>

³ <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/06/21/880832213/yes-wearing-masks-helps-heres-why>

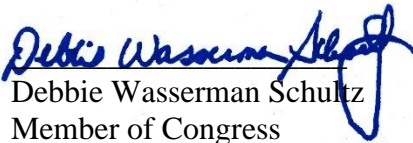
⁴ <https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/502440-masks-can-reduce-coronavirus-spread-by-40>

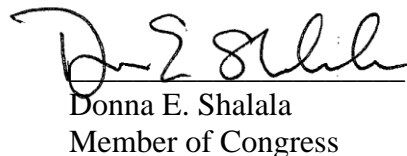
⁵ <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/06/21/880832213/yes-wearing-masks-helps-heres-why>


You have repeatedly mentioned that people need to have a measure of personal responsibility. It is essential to remember that we wear masks to protect those around us from the germs we may be carrying- especially those who may be more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. Masks provide a critical barrier, reducing the number of infectious viruses in exhaled breath, especially of asymptomatic people and those with mild symptoms⁶. It is particularly important to wear masks in locations with conditions that can accumulate high concentrations of viruses, such as health care settings, airplanes, restaurants, and other crowded places with reduced ventilation.⁷ The personal responsibility to which you refer regularly includes our responsibility to prevent others from becoming sick from germs that we expel. Requiring that Floridians wear masks in public is an essential part of this accountability because people are more likely to become infected when others choose not to be responsible and wear masks.


Wearing masks can help people feel more secure in their everyday activities, and play a role in safely re-opening the economy. While some communities throughout the state have adopted regulations requiring masks, the virus does not know or adhere to delineations of city or county. Floridians need strong, universal guidance from you during this time of uncertainty. We need to hear from you, clearly and unequivocally, that wearing a mask in public is a requirement. In saying so, you will be making a statement, driven by scientific data, that each individual has an urgent and integral role to play in slowing the spread of this virus.

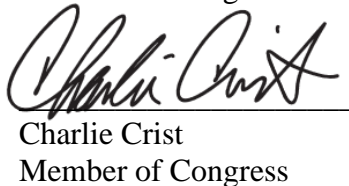
Sincerely,

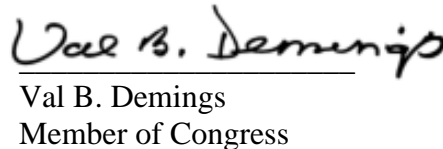

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Member of Congress


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Member of Congress

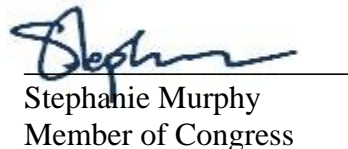

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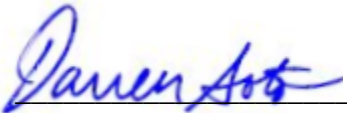

Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

⁶ <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/06/08/science.abc6197>

⁷ <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/06/08/science.abc6197>



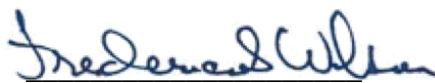
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