



COVID-19 Community Task Force

Columbus/Bartholomew County Indiana

October 6, 2020

Honorable Eric J. Holcomb
Governor, State of Indiana
200 W. Washington St., Rm. 206
Indianapolis, IN 46204

RE: Support & Request for Extension of Mandatory Face Covering

Dear Governor Holcomb,

Thank you for your leadership during the current COVID-19 pandemic. On behalf of our community, the undersigned representatives of the COVID-19 Community Task Force of Bartholomew County encourage you to continue with an official extension of the statewide face covering requirement, as outlined in your previous Executive Orders. Indiana stands at a crucial point in how our beautiful state continues to weather the brutal storm of this pandemic. When COVID-19 drove our world into social and physical isolation, Hoosiers had to find new, safe ways to conduct business and maintain personal connections, through the guidance of medical experts and the firm engagement of your administration. We ask that the face covering requirement continue, under the supervision of state healthcare professionals, for as long as the Centers for Disease Control continue to recommend mask wearing as the single most effective way currently available to limit the spread of coronavirus.

The COVID-19 Community Task Force of Bartholomew County – comprised of government, medical, education, business, faith-based and social services leaders in Bartholomew County – formed in February and meets regularly to coordinate insight, communication and resources. Collectively, we have done our part to communicate the importance of social distancing, sanitizing, and wearing face coverings. Thanks, in large part, to the establishment and wide-scale practice of mandatory face coverings within Executive Order 20-37 on July 24, Bartholomew County businesses, organizations and citizens have been able to slowly and safely resume services and interaction.

Local evidence of the success of your Executive Order(s) includes:

- Columbus Regional Health, our local health system serving a 10-county area and also one of the county's larger employers, has been able to maintain a steady and proactive response to COVID-19, as well as a resumption of ancillary health and wellness services. Furthermore, Columbus Regional Health's last spike in cases was in late August and daily hospitalizations related to COVID-19 have remained in single digits for more than 40 straight days.
- Schools from elementary to post-secondary opened in a timely manner, offering in-class and virtual instruction and both have continued without interruption since early August. Reported cases in both public (Bartholomew Consolidated Schools and Flatrock-Hawcreek) and private schools remain stable.

- As reported by local economic development and Chamber of Commerce officials, most local businesses and major manufacturers – namely our Fortune 200 international company, Cummins – have safely resumed services and production work critical to local, state and national economic health, reducing our local unemployment rate to 5.4% in August.
- Frontline workers are able to provide essential contributions in our Indiana communities because their fellow Hoosiers are masking for them.
- Social Services and our faith-based organizations are providing vital resources and outreach, including to our county’s most vulnerable populations.

The proof points outlined above, to name just a few, deserve celebration; however, like many other Indiana communities, Bartholomew County’s successes come amid heartache and loss. The repairing, rebuilding and healing must continue. Bartholomew County and the COVID-19 Community Task Force stand with our fellow Hoosiers to advocate for all we can do as individuals, businesses and government entities to continue to Mask Up and safely stay Back-on-Track. For these reasons and more, we strongly encourage you to continue Indiana’s mandatory face-covering requirements.

Sincerely,



James D. Lienhoop
Mayor
City of Columbus



James Bickel
President/CEO
Columbus Regional Hospital



Carl H. Lienhoop
Commissioner
Bartholomew County



Thomas A. Sonderman
Chief Medical Officer
Columbus Regional Hospital



Dr. Brian Niedbalski
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Bartholomew Co. Public Health



James S. Roberts, Ed.D
Superintendent
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Jason Hester
President
Greater Columbus EDC



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Jim Schacht
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