

Last night a committee I serve on passed a resolution to eliminate the mandate for mandatory mask use by citizens entering county facilities. On a 4-0 vote, the committee voted to send this resolution to the full board for consideration.

I'd like to elaborate on some details that were not discussed in the WLNS story. Earlier this year the Livingston County Board of Commissioners (BOC) approved a wide-ranging plan to address the COVID crisis. The Livingston County COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan was unanimously approved by the BOC. In addition to the mandated use of face coverings, this plan included requirements for social distancing, limiting the number of persons in common spaces, encouraging employees to remain in their assigned work areas as much as possible, implementing of telework, use of video conferencing, increased cleaning and sanitizing, installation of physical barriers, health monitoring, flexible leave, actively encourage sick employees to stay, etc. In addition to this plan, the BOC approved the hiring of a new epidemiologist and approved increased funding for COVID mitigation.

All of the mitigation techniques described above, along with the strong participation of citizens have effectively "flattened the curve" in Livingston County. According to statistics published by the State of Michigan, our county mitigation efforts have produced results that far exceed those of statewide averages. For example, our case fatality rate is 2.4% vs. statewide 5.3%. Our fatality rate per 100,000 citizens is 15.6 vs. statewide 68. Incredibly, our county's fatality rate is less than 1/4 of the statewide average.

Actually, our fatality rate would be even lower if you exclude the deaths caused by Governor Whitmer's placement of COVID patients in nursing homes. Shockingly, some of the Governor's placements included COVID patients in hospice care. Livingston County has 30 confirmed deaths, with 18 of these deaths occurring in nursing homes. Therefore, if you consider just the deaths occurring outside of nursing homes, our fatality rate is just 6.25 per 100,000 or less than 1/10 of the statewide average. (Added on 10/7: if the US had a fatality rate of 6.25 per 100,000 the total US deaths would be reduced to 20,625 rather than 213,462, saving 192,837 lives.)

With our county's performance, it is time to strike a better balance between liberty and security. Eliminating the mandate doesn't prevent a citizen from voluntarily choosing to use a face covering. In fact, the approved resolution encourages citizens to voluntarily comply with guidelines established to mitigate the spread of COVID19. The resolution also encourages the Governor and legislature to develop statewide policies that effectively preserve our liberties, mitigate the spread of COVID, and return our economic vitality