



August 10, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
Chair  
National Governors Association  
444 North Capital Street, Suite 267  
Washington, DC 20001

The Honorable Asa Hutchinson  
Vice Chair  
National Governors Association  
444 North Capital Street, Suite 267  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Governors:

We write on behalf of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) to congratulate you on becoming Chair and Vice Chair of the National Governors Association (NGA) and to thank you for your leadership in the COVID-19 response in your states and through the NGA. IDSA and HIVMA represent over 12,000 infectious diseases and HIV physicians, scientists, and other health care and public health professionals working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response in every state across the country, and we would be happy to serve as a resource to you as our nation continues to confront this pandemic.

We greatly appreciate that you have enacted mask requirements in your states, and ask that you use your leadership positions at NGA to provide education to your colleagues regarding the importance of statewide mask requirements to control the pandemic, protect the economy and allow for the safe reopening of schools. We further encourage the NGA to provide tools for governors to educate individuals in their own states about the importance of wearing masks or face coverings as a key, personal, family and community health-protecting tool to bend the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are deeply concerned that 16 states still do not have policies requiring masks or face coverings, and several of these states are experiencing surges in COVID-19 cases. As we quickly approach influenza season, we have a critical window of time to reduce the rapid spread of COVID-19 cases across the country through universal masking and physical distancing. If we fail to dramatically curtail COVID-19 transmission, it is likely that hospitals will become overwhelmed by infections due to both viruses, and more lives will be lost due to a shortage of ICU beds, ventilators and other essential equipment. In addition, a significant reduction in cases will spur public confidence in the safety of our communities, greatly increasing the number of people who will feel comfortable supporting the economy by patronizing businesses and sending their children to school.

Compelling scientific data indicate that masks are highly effective at preventing the spread of COVID-19 and should be worn by everyone, as asymptomatic transmission is a critical driver in this pandemic.<sup>1</sup> An analysis published by Goldman Sachs Research suggests that expanding

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<sup>1</sup> Brooks JT, Butler JC, Redfield RR. Universal Masking to Prevent SARS-CoV-2 Transmission—The Time Is Now. JAMA. Published online July 14, 2020. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.13107 <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2768532>

community masking by 15% could prevent the need to bring back stay-at-home orders that would otherwise cost an estimated 5% of gross domestic product, or a projected cost of \$1 trillion.<sup>2</sup>

State and local requirements are particularly effective at increasing the use of masks. We strongly urge all states to require individuals to wear masks or face coverings when outside the home, including in outdoor settings when physical distancing of 6 feet cannot be maintained, with rare exceptions for those for whom masks are medically or developmentally inappropriate.

Public education campaigns led by governors are critical to help everyone understand the importance and effectiveness of wearing masks and the proper way to wear them. Clear, consistent messaging from state leaders, trusted health experts, and respected local community representatives who have strong ties to the populations with the lowest levels of mask use is essential to normalize masking as we have normalized other critical health and safety measures, such as wearing seatbelts and bicycle helmets or use of condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

Thank you for your leadership in the COVID-19 response. IDSA and HIVMA would welcome an opportunity to collaborate with the NGA. Please consider our society and our members a resource as you continue to support states in controlling the pandemic.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. File, Jr., MD, MSc  
Fellow of the IDSA  
President, IDSA



Judith Feinberg, MD  
Fellow of the IDSA  
Chair, HIVMA

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<sup>2</sup> Hatzius J, Struyven D, Rosenberg I. Face Masks and GDP. Goldman Sachs Research. Published June 29, 2020. <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/pages/face-masks-and-gdp.html>