



November 18,2020

Governor Parson:

The Missouri Society for Respiratory Care appreciates your leadership and previous actions that you have taken to limit the spread of COVID-19. While recognizing your preference for personal responsibility and local control of mandates, this has proven to no longer be effective. In Spring, this virus was concentrated in in specific areas across our region, but now the virus has taken over almost the entire Missouri region.

Respiratory therapists are on the front lines of the fight to care for Missourians with COVID-19. Speaking as representative of Missouri's approximately 4,000 respiratory therapists, our therapists are concerned for the health and welfare of the citizens within the state. The latest resurgence of COVID-19 has our workforce working long hours in uncomfortable PPE for 12-hour shifts, working overtime, and working diligently to save and improve the lives of those suffering from this disease. Many of our Respiratory Therapist have been stricken ill with COVID-19 themselves, increasing the severe staffing shortages felt across our state. We empathize with our patients and families over the heartbreak and suffering this disease has caused, we, along with our other health care provider partners are sometimes the only people our patients see in their most vulnerable time, or at worst are at the bedside when they are taking their last breath. This continues to impact our therapists and other health care provider colleagues mentally and physically.

We have been watching the epi curves and can see what is most likely yet to come. We see how this virus is taking a toll now more than ever on our therapists, our families, our friends, our communities and we need more aggressive action. We are scared that our health systems will have to turn away patients from the care they need or that healthcare facilities will not have the medical equipment or PPE to provide care to those infected.

The time is now to issue a statewide masking mandate. We agree with the Missouri Hospital Associations support of efforts to 'educate, cajole and encourage Missourians to wear masks and engage in social distancing to help curb the virus spread'. We need our government leaders to align with our healthcare experts in strong support for wearing masks, social distancing, and good hand hygiene by setting the example and instituting a state-wide mask mandate. We urge you to issue a statewide mask mandate, effective immediately to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 to all.

Sincerely,

Robin Kidder President, Missouri Society for Respiratory Care and Board of Directors