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To Tennessee County Mayors:

As you are aware, on Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> Governor Lee issued an order to grant authority to Tennessee County Mayors in 89 counties to issue face mask requirements in their counties. The Tennessee Medical Association is grateful to Governor Lee for this action. We provide the **following information to assist you** in making these decisions.

Due to the rapidly rising number of cases in our state, the physicians of Tennessee as represented by the Tennessee Medical Association recommend that each of you consider issuing requirements to wear masks in public in your counties to attempt to **slow the spread of COVID-19 in Tennessee**. Short of reverting to shutting down portions of our economy again, universal wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing are the only practical ways to slow the virus going forward.

As cases and hospitalizations rise, increases in deaths may ensue over the next few weeks. Hospital and ICU capacities are already being challenged in some locations and this may worsen as the spike in cases over the past week works through the health care system. Wearing masks is one way we can protect others, especially our vulnerable populations, from catching this potentially deadly virus.

The metric of **new cases per 100,000 population per day averaged over the last 7 days** is one way to compare new case growth among counties and states with varying populations. As of Tuesday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, **Tennessee as a state was at 21.11 new cases/day/100,000**. By comparison, at the start of the Stay at Home order in April, Tennessee was at 4.42 new cases/day/100,000. At its peak in April, New York state was at 51 new cases/day/100,000. Texas issued a state-wide mask mandate last week at 20.7 new cases/day/100,000. The average for the USA on July 2<sup>nd</sup> was 13.89 new cases/day/100,000.

While we would recommend that all Tennessee counties consider implementing mask requirements at this time due to the increasing numbers of cases state-wide, we would especially recommend this action in [counties with higher numbers](#) of new cases per population per day (over 10 new cases/day/100,000 population averaged over the last 7 days).

We appreciate all your efforts to lead our citizens and protect our vulnerable population during this ongoing pandemic. The physicians of the Tennessee Medical Association stand with you as together we endure this virus and attempt to limit its effects on lives and our economy. We would encourage you to seek input from TMA leaders and your local physician TMA members as you deliberate these challenging decisions.

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