

## GOV. EVERS FACE COVERING REQUIREMENT TPs

- COVID-19 is a global pandemic that has already taken the lives of nearly 200,000 Americans, including more than 1,200 Wisconsinites.
- Time is of the essence in responding to a crisis, and Gov. Evers and Democrats have worked quickly to respond to the challenges our state is facing because of COVID-19.
- Our work to fight COVID-19 began several months ago, and while we are continuing to learn about this virus, what we do know is that the situation and circumstances can change quickly and our state's response must be adapt to the virus we are up against.
- **As campuses reopened the last several weeks, we've seen a new surge in cases across our state. Although we're facing the same pandemic, these circumstances are drastically different than the one we were in a just a few weeks ago before students returned to campus.**
  - After the governor issued a statewide mask mandate on July 29<sup>th</sup>, COVID-19 infection rate began to slow during the month of August.
  - The average daily number of new cases decreased from 1,062 cases on August 1st to 678 cases on August 31<sup>st</sup>
  - However, with the return of students to university campuses the slowing trend reversed course with the next 20,000 cases occurring within only two weeks' time.
  - Wisconsin is now experiencing unprecedented, near-exponential growth of the COVID-19 pandemic with the daily number of new cases rising from 678 on August 31st to 1,791 on September 21st, a 2.6-fold increase in three weeks, driven in part by the unprecedented number of infections among 18-24 year-olds.
- By mid-September, eight of the 20 cities with the fastest increase of COVID-19 cases in the United States were in Wisconsin: La Crosse, Whitewater, Green Bay, Beaver Dam, Oshkosh, Platteville, Appleton, and Madison, six of which have University of Wisconsin System campuses.
- **Students attending colleges and universities pose a significant risk to spreading COVID-19 to other age groups due to the high propensity among 18-24-year-olds to travel, including commuting to school or within a community with a college or university.**
- In addition, students returning home for Thanksgiving break from campuses with high infection rates poses a threat to every county in the state of Wisconsin, especially as many several campuses plan to shift to virtual instruction after the break.
- **It is absolutely critical that we get this virus under control on our campuses as quickly as possible and before the Thanksgiving break to help prevent the further spread of this virus in communities across our state.**
- Throughout this pandemic the governor and Democrats have listened to the advice of public health experts and scientists and worked as fast as we could to respond so we could keep

Wisconsin families safe and flatten the curve to prevent our healthcare workers and systems from being overwhelmed—that hasn't changed.

- **We know that face coverings and masks can save lives and help us prevent the spread of COVID-19.**
- That's why today Gov. Evers announced a new public health emergency regarding the campus outbreaks we are seeing across our state and a new statewide order requiring face coverings with limited exceptions.
  - Under Gov. Evers' order, face coverings will be required for every person age five and older any time a person is indoors or in an enclosed space and not at a private residence.
  - That means you can still go for a walk outside, go swimming, or eat without a face covering on, but if you're going to head to the grocery store or you're supporting a local restaurant and waiting for your food, we need you to mask up, folks.
  - And if you are at a private residence but you're with a group of people, we'd still encourage you to wear a face covering.
- Wearing a face covering helps protect our communities, including those at higher risk for severe illness and workers who frequently come into contact with others like nurses, grocers, and first responders.
- **My mask protects you, your mask protects me, and our masks work best when we both wear them together.**
- The sooner we get back to working together to flatten the curve and prevent the spread of COVID-19, the sooner we can get safely back to work, school, sports, concerts, and doing all the things we all miss, and make sure our economy doesn't face any further setbacks.
- That's why a statewide approach to requiring face coverings is so important—we have community spread statewide, so we need a statewide effort to stop this virus, flatten the curve, and prevent our healthcare systems from being overwhelmed by more spikes in cases.
  - What we know about this virus is that it doesn't care if you are perfectly healthy or young, it doesn't care if you're a Republican or a Democrat, and it certainly doesn't care about any town, city, or county boundary.
  - Our statewide efforts to combat this virus have worked before, saving hundreds of lives and preventing countless hospitalizations.
- Republicans have consistently demanded a piecemeal approach—they've said we don't need a statewide effort to respond to this crisis.
- **Well, we've tried it the Republican way—it's not working.**

- Meanwhile, Legislative Republicans have failed to take any meaningful action to address this pandemic.
  - Republicans' lawsuit to strike down Gov. Evers' Safer at Home order claimed they wanted a "seat at the table" but they still haven't shown up to the table to do any work.
  - Republicans and their allies have filed more lawsuits than they have passed bills during this pandemic to help Wisconsin workers, families, farmers, and small businesses affected by COVID-19.
  - It's been 160 days since Republicans last passed a bill.
  - While Gov. Evers and Democrats have been focusing on keeping people safe, Republicans have proven they will always put politics before people, even in the midst of a global pandemic.
- **Republicans at every turn have challenged Gov. Evers' efforts to keep the people of our state healthy and safe, but we're not going to let that stop us from putting people first and doing everything we can to keep people healthy and safe.**
  - Emotions are high when it comes to wearing a face covering in public, but we are in a battle against this virus, not each other.
  - Public health is a team sport, and it is on all of us, together, to ensure our public health efforts are successful.
  - Let's mask up, Wisconsin, and let's work together to get our state back on track.