



Waukesha County

Office of the County Executive

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STATEMENT FROM WAUKESHA COUNTY EXECUTIVE PAUL FARROW AFTER GOVERNOR EVERS ISSUES MASK MANDATE

(WAUKESHA, WI) - Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow made the following statement after Governor Tony Evers issued a statewide mandatory mask mandate on July 30, 2020.

“Waukesha County has an active and aggressive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the community’s health and safety are my top priorities. However, the Governor’s Emergency Order to mandate mask-wearing goes too far. While Waukesha County supports and actively promotes masks and face coverings as a tool to stop the spread of the virus, a government mandate will create many more issues that will not only make it more difficult to respond to the pandemic, the unenforceability of the order undermines existing laws, and overreach from the state erodes public trust in the government.

“Today, our 911 dispatch center, Sheriff’s Department and other Waukesha County departments and divisions are already receiving calls from residents concerned about this order, and we expect that to intensify when it goes into effect on Saturday and individuals begin to report others to law enforcement.

“I want to urge all members of the community NOT to call 911 to report individuals who do not properly follow the mask mandate. We need to preserve emergency response resources that are already taxed as we work to manage this pandemic, we need to ensure that local law enforcement is not reallocated from other areas to enforce this order, and we need to recognize that there are individuals who, for a number of reasons including health conditions, may not be able to safely wear a mask.

“The unfortunate fact is that the biggest impact will be on our local business owners and their employees who may be put in the uncomfortable position of enforcing the Governor’s order. Private businesses should have the flexibility to implement their own rules on mask usage in their establishments, it should not be their role to enforce government orders.

“Lastly, many residents have valid concerns about how this mandate infringes on their personal freedoms. Some parts of the Governor’s order mandates mask usage even at times that social distancing may be more practical and less invasive. At this time of historically low faith in the government, these issues have a marked impact on individuals who value their freedom of choice. That is why, while Waukesha County encourages all residents to follow public health guidelines to stop the spread of COVID-19, including wearing a mask when social distancing is not possible, we must rely on personal responsibility bolstered by reliable public information to encourage them to do so. Preserving trust within our community is more important than ever and forced government compliance is not the way to do that.”

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