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MARINA DIMITRIJEVIC
ALDERWOMAN, 14TH DISTRICT

MKE Cares: Ordinance would require mask wearing in public spaces

Public Safety and Health Committee to take up legislation on Thursday (7/2)

Statement of Alderwoman Marina Dimitrijevic June 30, 2020

It is time for the City of Milwaukee to take the important step of implementing a citywide face mask mandate for public spaces, and this week I am introducing Common Council legislation that would require the wearing of masks in public spaces to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Our city cares about our children, neighbors, friends, parents, people with disabilities and medical exceptions, retail and restaurant workers, and caregivers. To protect our essential workers and loved ones as we reopen Milwaukee must have a uniform citywide mask requirement for public spaces that is in line with CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines and regulated by the Health Department.

The science on face coverings is clear, as they help stop the spread of COVID 19 and save lives. When you wear a face mask during this pandemic, you are demonstrating care for our community. The fastest way to reopen our economy safely and return to a new normal is by covering your mouth and nose in public.

The CDC recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings and when around people outside of their household, especially when other physical/social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The CDC also says cloth face coverings may help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others, and cloth face coverings are most likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used by people in public settings.

The **MKE Cares** ordinance will closely resemble the mask ordinance that has been approved for the City of Los Angeles (<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-05-14/l-a-now-requires-face-coverings-even-when-outside-here-are-the-rules>), where authorities have sought firm measures to reduce COVID-19 spread in all public spaces.

We are seeing far too many communities across the nation experiencing huge spikes in the spread of COVID-19 as they reopen and do not require people going to stores, restaurants, bars and other businesses to wear masks. A clear mask requirement can help us reduce the spread of COVID-19 and prevent us from joining those 'hot spot' locations where the virus is quickly infecting entire communities.

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The MKE Cares ordinance I am introducing will go before the Public Safety and Health Committee during a special virtual meeting on **Thursday, July 2 at 9 a.m.**

Those interested in providing comment electronically on the legislation should follow these steps:

1. Visit milwaukee.legistar.com/Calendar.
2. Select the “e-comment” button across from the meeting during which the desired file will be heard. Meeting info is listed above.
3. Scroll down to the item number that corresponds to the desired file and click the “comment” button.
4. Fill in the necessary information, select a position and type a comment in the comment box. Note that comments are limited to 600 characters.
5. Hit submit.

Those wishing to provide comment by more traditional methods should email jpolan@milwaukee.gov and indicate the mask mandate file in the subject line or call (414) 286-2366. Email is preferred.

My MKE Cares legislation is strongly supported by those who work in the city’s restaurant and culinary sector. **The Milwaukee Independent Restaurant Coalition (MIRC)** issued this response to the ordinance: “This is our city and we deserve to be safe in it while supporting our local businesses.”

The legislation is expected to go before the full Council for introduction during its **July 7 meeting** (just as with Thursday’s special virtual Public Safety and Health Committee meeting, it starts at 9 a.m.) which is available for viewing as it will **be televised live on the City Channel - channel 25 on Spectrum Cable and channel 99 on AT&T U-Verse in the City of Milwaukee - and via streaming video** on the city website at city.milwaukee.gov/Channel25.

The MKE Cares legislation is expected to be referred for a full hearing during a special Public Safety and Health Committee meeting on July 8.

Hundreds of local businesses (and growing) have signed on to a letter sent today to Mayor Barrett and Common Council President Cavalier Johnson asking them to take action to implement a citywide mask mandate for public spaces. Businesses in Wisconsin can mandate masks for their customers, and a growing number in Milwaukee now have posted requirements for mask wearing. Additionally, a resident petition so far signed by thousands is also seeking the mask mandate.

Currently, more than 30 states have a mask mandate in place requiring masks in at least some situations. Michigan requires them in every situation where social distancing isn’t possible. Minneapolis requires them inside retail stores, hotels, schools, governments, and recreational facilities. Illinois has a statewide mandate. Many of the mandates provide exceptions for public situations when social distancing can be maintained or wearing a mask would be burdensome.

I look forward to discussing this important MKE Cares legislation with my colleagues and with interested residents and business owners.

