



MISSOURI COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS

November 18, 2020

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The Honorable Mike Parson
Governor of Missouri
Missouri State Capitol
201 West Capitol Avenue, Room 216
Jefferson City, MO 65101-1556

Dear Governor Parson,

Missouri emergency physicians are grateful for the work you and your administration have done for the state of Missouri during the pandemic. We, along with many other medical associations, reached out to you in March asking for a statewide stay home order, and you fulfilled the request. This effort prevented Missouri hospitals from being overwhelmed, and we thank you.

Missouri is now nearing a situation we all feared, our hospitals and ICUs are being overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases. Emergency physicians are on the front line of much of this and are fighting a battle that gets harder each day. We are hearing from our members how their emergency departments are on the phone for hours each day trying to find beds for sick patients that need in-patient care. We are hearing stories of boarding patients in the emergency department, sometimes for days, due to a lack of available beds. We know this is more than just an inconvenience; boarding in the emergency department increases patient mortality. Rural areas that are already experiencing severe bed shortages within their area will not be able to transfer patients to larger urban centers as they become filled. We are currently hearing of patients being transferred out of state due to a lack of staffed open inpatient and ICU beds here in Missouri.

All of this is what we feared in the spring, but were able to avoid by working together, and now this fear has become our reality. At the current pace, it does not appear that we will be able to avoid this again.

Our ask of you today is to please implement a statewide mask mandate. As physicians working clinically, we routinely wear masks for 8 to 12 straight hours to keep everyone safe in the hospital. We physicians definitely know firsthand masks work to significantly limit spread of COVID. We live it personally each day on the front line and depend on it to keep us, our colleagues, our patients, and our family safe. Unfortunately, we know it isn't enough to expect people to follow through with mask wearing on their own. We can tell through high case numbers in those areas without a mask mandate that this strategy is not working.

On behalf of emergency physicians across our state, we urge you to implement a statewide mask mandate to protect the citizens of Missouri, and the healthcare workers who are being impacted by this now, more than ever before.

Sincerely,

Christopher Sampson, MD, FACEP
President