

November 25,2021

To the Danville Selectboard

From medical providers residing in Danville, Vermont.

We are disappointed that Governor Scott has not reinstated a mask mandate, and has instead left the decision to each town. This shifts the burden to you as the select board to make a decision that may be unpopular with a very impassioned and vocal minority. As a group of medical providers residing in Danville, we would like to give you full support in initiating a local mask mandate. The CDC recommends indoor mask wearing even by those who are vaccinated in areas of substantial or high transmission. Vermont as a whole and specifically Caledonia county is now considered an area of high transmission.

Vermont is currently experiencing a significant increase in Covid cases. Cases are up over 20 percent in the last week. Our case per capita rate is higher than it was during last winter and spring when we were under a state of emergency. Caledonia County is experiencing more cases per 100,000 than Vermont as a whole -76 in the last week in Caledonia compared to 55 overall. This increase is not simply explained by more testing, as daily percent positivity rates, hospitalizations, ICU occupancy and deaths are all higher as well. We clearly meet the CDC criteria of high transmission. We have had increased cases in the last week in local schools including the Danville school.

Wearing a mask is safe and effective. There is increasing scientific evidence that it decreases rates of transmission, and lowers the severity of transmission. There is no scientific evidence that wearing a mask is harmful. Even during exercise research has shown that heart rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, oxygen level and time of exhaustion are not significantly affected by wearing a mask. You will surely hear individual stories of people who do not feel well when they wear a mask. Remember that surgeons have been wearing masks for over 100 years for many hours at a time during long and complicated procedures without any ill effect.

Governor Scott has argued that wearing a mask should be left up to individuals. But clearly that is not working. As we move through our community, it is clear that while most people wore masks last winter and spring, hardly anyone is masking at this time. We are all exhausted by this pandemic and are in some ways in denial that it is getting worse again. It is harder to wear a mask when others are not. The current message is- if there is no mask mandate, then wearing a mask must not be that important. That is not true. If we all wear masks, we will be protecting each other, protecting our community, reminding each other that we care about each other.

Again, we fully support a mask mandate for the town of Danville.

Sincerely-

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