

February 9, 2021

Dear Chair Liebling:

AFSCME Council 5 represents 43,000 workers in Minnesota. A persistent and paramount concern we have on behalf of all of the workers we represent is their health and safety while they serve the public in their various roles. In the interest of the safety of all and on behalf of our members, their families, and the public we serve, we ask you to support HF604 which will codify the use of masks while CDC guidance to stop the spread of COVID are in place. This is a common-sense and effective tactic to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Opposition to this common-sense and effective tool has been sensationalized by leaders who are more interested in scoring cheap political points by promulgating a message of violated liberties than they are in working collaboratively to slow the spread and end the pandemic. It was irresponsible and unfortunate that political gain, during a global pandemic, was prioritized ahead of duty to the greater common good. The simple act of wearing a mask and supporting it as the good public health policy that it is would have saved many lives.

Attempts to end the Peacetime Emergency and the corresponding Executive Orders are irresponsible.

Frontline workers all across the state and country have sacrificed a lot during this pandemic and it isn't over yet. We have already lost members to COVID-19 and before this pandemic ends more will likely make the ultimate sacrifice. As policy makers, you should be doing everything possible to minimize the future toll of COVID on frontline workers, their families and the general public – supporting a mask mandate during this pandemic is the bare minimum.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Bleyhl".

Julie Bleyhl, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ethan Vogel".

Ethan Vogel, Legislative Director

*AFSCME Council 5 is a union of more than 43,000 working Minnesotans from across the state. We advocate for excellence in services for the public, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers.*