



February 9, 2021

Chair Tina Liebling
477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Jamie Gulley
President

Dear Chair Liebling:

Jigme Ugen
Executive Vice President

Phillip Cryan
Executive Vice President

Brenda Hilbrich
Executive Vice President

Rasha Ahmad Sharif
Executive Vice President

SEIU Healthcare Minnesota represents 40,000 healthcare workers in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, and self-directed homecare. On their behalf, I write to express our strong support for HF 604, which would codify the Governor's mask mandate into statute for as long as the Federal CDC determines such a measure is necessary to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, our members understood their duty to wear a medical mask when necessary to protect the health of their patients. We all share that duty now because of the widespread prevalence of COVID-19, the ease with which it spreads, and an infected person's ability to spread it without noticing any symptoms. Dr. Michael Osterholm recently testified in this committee that broad public masking will help slow the spread of the disease and saves lives.

This broad community benefit clearly outweighs the minor burden it imposes on individuals. Wearing a mask is not simply an individual choice - unless a person can commit to not breathing. In the public places covered by this bill, every single breath puts the health of other people at risk.

Every day our members must live with the consequences of these choices. They risk their lives to keep COVID patients alive in our hospitals. They risk their lives to stop the virus from burning through our nursing homes. Requiring the public to wear a mask is the least we can do to have their backs.

Sincerely yours,

Rick Varco
Political Director

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