



June 17, 2020

Commissioner Pat Gerard, Chair
Commissioner Dave Eggers, Vice Chair
Commissioner Janet C. Long
Commissioner Charlie Justice
Commissioner Karen Williams Seel
Commissioner Kathleen Peters
Commissioner Kenneth Welch
Pinellas County Administrator Barry Burton

Dear Members of the Pinellas County Board of Commissioners:

As hospital leaders, we are doing all that we can to protect our community from COVID-19. We are asking that our fellow citizens do all they can to help keep themselves and their families, friends and neighbors safe from this virus.

As healthcare leaders, we have come together to support the encouragement of our community to wear masks in public indoor spaces to protect each other when social distancing becomes problematic. We think this is simply the right thing to do to protect our community.

A few months ago, there was little data on whether masks reduce disease transmission. But as we learn more about COVID-19, the science is becoming clearer. New studies suggest that masks are one of the best tools that we have to prevent community transmission of COVID-19. A review published earlier this month in [The Lancet](#) analyzed 172 observational studies from 16 countries and found that the available data suggests that wearing masks protects the general public from infection.

As you know, over the past several days, we have seen a rise in the number of COVID-19 cases here in Tampa Bay. We are concerned that transmission appears to be rising as people become less cautious about social distancing and mask utilization. To keep our community healthy, a county-wide mask ordinance is something you might consider. While we realize there is a lot that would need to be considered in making this decision, we believe this would be an effective reminder that we truly are all in this together and we must all do our part to stop the spread of the virus. If you decide to implement a mask ordinance, we request that you consider consulting with our teams of epidemiologists and infectious disease physicians to assist in developing the guidelines around the ordinance and use science to help inform the plan.

By wearing masks in public indoor spaces, we protect not only ourselves, but also our friends and neighbors – especially those with risk factors that make them more vulnerable to the most devastating effects of COVID-19. We ask everyone to please join us in helping to keep Tampa Bay healthy.

Sincerely,

Larry J. Feinman, D.O.
Chief Medical Officer
HCA Healthcare – West Florida Division

Nishant Anand, M.D.
Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer
BayCare Health System

Doug Ardoin, M.D.
President
AdventHealth Physician Network – WFD