

To Whom:

This communication is written in support of measures for enforcement of recently enacted masking mandate.

First, thank you for enacting a much needed mitigation action. Clearly voluntary compliance with proven measures have not been embraced. As a foreseeable result of benign neglect Petersburg ranks amongst the high per capita case rates in the world as of this writing.

Petersburg:	2850/100,000
Alaska:	550/100,000
USA	160/100,000

Mitigation factors have a proven affect on disease spread and on case counts. As efforts continue to increase vaccination rates, other measures need to continue. Masking, social distancing, and good hygiene are effective if enforced. It is clear from a recent trip along Front Street that a portion of the businesses feel no inclination to adhere to said mandate. Without incentive to comply or disincentive to not comply the likelihood of success is in doubt. As such I am endorsing some means of compelling compliance. This may include citing or fining both organizations and/or individuals found to be defying the masking mandate.

The Petersburg School System has set up a model response. They are utilizing a combination of in person and remote learning. They have developed a testing protocol that has identified cases early. They are working doubly hard to provide dual tract of instruction and are limited by staff illness or need for staff absence due to child care issues as day cares are affected.

Likewise the hospital is operating with minimal staff or replacement options for the same reasons. The State is in the process of proving itinerant nurses to help with our ongoing efforts to test and treat. Luckily Petersburg early on made a decision to test aggressively. This provided a protective bubble for our community while surrounding communities had much high case loads. That bubble no longer exists; again, a foreseeable result of relaxed or absent mitigation measures.

Recent spread within borough departments has taken three officers out of duty status and I am told that the borough may have to decide between snow removal and trash collection next week due to staffing issues. Public Works is at minimum staffing for water production. This should be a wake up call!

It is no longer a viable option to simply ignore the reality we now face. Doing nothing, being missing in action, or denying a problem exists is how we got to this point. I strong urge the Assembly to take the next step and provide enforcement language to the existing mandate. I believe it will increase compliance, as it has elsewhere, and provide much needed cover for businesses to avoid alienating their patrons. We have been extremely fortunate thus far with the local morbidity rates. I can only hope that I situation continues, with support of the Assembly endorsing the next steps to control this pandemic.

Mark Tuccillo
Petersburg Public Health Officer