



**LINA HIDALGO**



**MAYOR SYLVESTER TURNER**

March 2, 2021

Dear Governor Abbott,

Thank you for your continuous efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It has certainly been a challenging time for all of us. As we make progress in keeping our residents safe with the continued rollout of vaccines and towards re-opening our economy, we understand that you may be considering lifting face covering requirements. We urge you to keep the requirement in place. We must continue the proven public health interventions most responsible for our positive case trends and not allow over-confidence to endanger our successes.

Supported by our public health professionals, we believe it would be premature and harmful to do anything to lose widespread adoption of this preventative measure. Scientific studies have shown repeatedly that the widespread wearing of face masks slows down the spread of the virus. Public health organizations around the world, including our own public health officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have documented how the combination of wearing face coverings, keeping a physical distance of at least 6 ft., and frequent handwashing are most effective at reducing the spread of the virus.

Masking requirements have allowed many small businesses to remain open and their employees to return to work. The mask order has allowed more students to return to in-person learning and has better protected them, their teachers and school staff.

Especially with the arrival of new variants of the virus to Texas and our cities, with the associated potential for a future spike in cases, preserving the most effective of our existing safety measures is even more important. We have to do everything in our power to prevent new surges in infections, subsequent hospitalizations, and more deaths to avoid further individual and collective suffering and economic pain. The mask requirement is a wise and effective choice. It is a minor discomfort compared to the alternative.

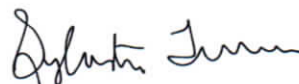
Importantly, the requirement communicates the importance of masking to Texans generally in an unambiguous way. Removing it, even with associated messaging that urges voluntary compliance, sends wrong and confusing signals that masking is not important, not effective or that the virus is under control.

We have come a long way in this struggle and need to make sure we see it through to the successful conclusion. The safety and well-being of our residents is at the heart of all our decisions. Let science be our guide and let us work together to keep Texas healthy and prosperous.

Sincerely,



Lina Hidalgo  
County Judge



Sylvester Turner  
Mayor