



**JAMES L. MADARA, MD**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

ama-assn.org  
t (312) 464-5000

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Michele Manahan, MD  
President, MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society  
1211 Cathedral St.  
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516

Dear Dr. Manahan:

Thank you for reaching out to the American Medical Association (AMA) regarding encouraging the White House Coronavirus Task Force to consider the immediate establishment of a national mandate to wear facial masks or coverings in public at all times in any setting in which social distancing measures are not guaranteed. We sincerely apologize for the delay in responding to your letter; we have been occupied with response efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you noted in your letter, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a recommendation that the public “wear cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.” The rationale for this recommendation was increasing evidence that those who are pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. The AMA has strongly supported this recommendation and understands that this language was carefully worded in consideration of the ongoing supply shortages of personal protective equipment for health care workers.

Given the growing body of evidence supporting the use of cloth face masks by the public to reduced droplet transmission, thus facilitating source control, the AMA will continue to call on the public to wear face masks when social distancing is not possible. However, we do not think that a national mandate to wear cloth face masks in public is feasible at this time. The AMA also has concerns about the disproportionate enforcement of COVID-19 public health mandates, including a national face mask mandate, in predominantly Black and Brown communities. These individuals appear more likely to be targeted by police for simply wearing masks and in some cases have been targeted for not wearing masks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style.

James L. Madara, MD