



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

Dear Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and House Speaker Lee Chatfield -

As we continue to see more COVID-19 infections among our friends, neighbors, and colleagues across Michigan, I am calling on you to enact and enforce a requirement to wear masks at all times within the Michigan Senate and House chambers. I am making this appeal to you as president of the Michigan Senate, as the father of young children, and as someone who has seen first-hand the devastation caused by this virus.

Since March 10, Michigan has seen more than 129,000 COVID-19 cases and 6,800 deaths. That means that every member of each legislative body has seen the people they serve impacted by this pandemic. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization have long recommended cloth masks be worn over the nose and mouth, along with hand washing and adequate physical distancing, to slow the spread of this virus.

I acknowledge that mask wearing has become politically charged, but I am calling on you to join me in putting politics aside on this issue.

This is not a political issue. Leader Shirkey, beyond colleagues in the Senate Chamber, we are engineers—men of science—at heart and by training.

This is a matter of science. Masks are proven to be an effective and simple way to slow the spread of this virus.

This is personal for me. I have seen what the coronavirus can do. I have lost 23 people who are close to me, including members of my family. Speaker Chatfield, we are both family men who have always chosen to prioritize family health and safety, especially if they have elevated risk factors. In addition to my family, I fear for the safety of the people I know working in the frontlines every day in your district and across our state.

This is ultimately about standing tall and doing what is the right for the people who serve our state. Our members are elected to serve in these Chambers, their staffs serve in critical support roles for our constituents, and the media have a duty to inform the public about the actions of our government. They all deserve to know their safety is respected by their leadership.

Requiring members of the Senate and House to mask up is also about the safety of our families, our friends, and anyone we cross paths with after we leave these Chambers. We have no way to know who is at-risk or who has an at-risk loved one waiting for them at home. The decision to wear a mask demonstrates that you respect the safety of everyone around you and everyone that they care about. So let us model the safest behavior with the hopes that others would do the same.

We have witnessed multiple recent infections among elected officials, staff members, and members of the media. We know that this virus can spread before symptoms are exhibited. We know the virus kills, and we know those who survive face an unknown future of complications.

We also know that taking precautions, especially wearing masks, will greatly reduce the risk of the spread of this virus. Leaders lead, and it is on all of us to step up and protect each other during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Garlin Gilchrist II".

Garlin Gilchrist II
Lieutenant Governor of Michigan