pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Requiring Universal Face Coverings

COVID-19 is a contagious disease that is rapidly spreading from person to person. People infected are capable of exposing others to COVID-19 even if their symptoms are mild, such as a cough, or even if they are asymptomatic. Additionally, exposure is possible by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching one's mouth, nose, or eyes. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell. Early symptoms may also include chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting, and runny nose. Older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions are at a higher risk for serious illness.

The first cases of COVID-19 were reported in the United States in January 2020. Since then, multiple areas of the United States have experienced "community spread" of COVID-19, meaning that the illness is being transmitted through unknown contact, and not from contacts with known cases. On March 6, 2020, after the first cases of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania were confirmed, the Governor issued a Proclamation of Disaster Emergency. Since that date, the number of positive cases has continued to rise, and community spread has continued in the Commonwealth as well. Case counts rapidly increased throughout the Commonwealth in March and April, 2020. As of July 1, 2020, every county in the Commonwealth has been affected, the number of cases is 87,242, and 6,687 individuals have died from COVID-19.

In order to slow the spread and protect the people of the Commonwealth, the Governor and I issued Orders on March 19, 2020, closing all Commonwealth businesses that are not life sustaining. *See Order of the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Regarding the Closure of All Businesses That Are Not Life Sustaining,* as amended; *Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Regarding the Closure of All Businesses That Are Not Life Sustaining*, as amended. On April 1, 2020, the Governor and I issued Orders directing all individuals in Pennsylvania to stay at home. *See Order of the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for Individuals to Stay at Home*, as amended; *Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health to Stay at Home,* as amended.

In addition, I issued an Order on April 15, 2020, requiring mitigation measures to be applied at businesses that are permitted to engage in in-person operations, including a requirement that all customers wear masks while on premises of businesses that serve the public within a building or a defined area and directs businesses to deny entry to individuals not wearing masks, unless the business is providing medication, medical supplies, or food, in which case the business must provide alternative methods of pick-up or delivery of such goods. Individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition (including children under the age of 2 years per CDC guidance) are permitted to enter the premises and are not

required to provide documentation of such medical condition. *See Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Directing Public Health Safety Measures for Businesses Permitted to Maintain In-person Operations.*

Those mitigation efforts slowed the spread of the disease, protected our hospitals from being overwhelmed, and enabled our hospitals to care for our ill residents. Accordingly, in Orders on May 7, 2020, the Governor and I suspended restrictions for certain areas instituted in the orders on March 19, 2020, as amended, and April 1, 2020, as amended. *See Order of the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for Limited Opening of Business, Lifting of Stay at Home Requirements, and Continued Aggressive Mitigation Efforts, as amended; Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health for a Limited Opening of Businesses, Lifting of Stay Home Requirements and Continued Aggressive Mitigation Efforts, as amended.*

These mitigation strategies, practiced by all persons in the Commonwealth, have been successful in slowing the spread of the virus, and have allowed the phased and considered reopening of the Commonwealth, *see Order of the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the Continued Reopening of the Commonwealth* of May 27, 2020, as amended; *Order of the Secretary for the Continued Reopening of the Commonwealth* of May 27, 2020, as amended. Person-to-person spread does continue however, and with the reopening, the Commonwealth is beginning to see increases in new cases. Mindful of the need to slow this increase, in order to avoid the types of stringent Commonwealth-wide mitigation strategies that were discontinued a short time ago, and in order to avoid the resurgence that is overwhelming the health care systems and public health systems in other states, I am ordering that all persons in the Commonwealth wear face coverings in accordance with this Order. Face coverings can decrease the spread of respiratory droplets from people. *See* https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#recent-studies. When used in public settings, face coverings will work to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

COVID-19 is a threat to the public's health, for which the Secretary of Health may order general control measures, including, but not limited to, closure, isolation, and quarantine. This authority is granted to the Secretary of Health pursuant to Pennsylvania law. *See* section 5 of the Disease Prevention and Control Law, 35 P.S. § 521.5; sections 2102(a) and 2106 of the Administrative Code of 1929, 71 P.S. §§ 532(a), and 536; and the Department of Health's regulations at 28 Pa. Code §§ 27.60-27.68 (relating to disease control measures; isolation; quarantine; movement of persons subject to isolation or quarantine; and release from isolation and quarantine). Particularly, the Department of Health has the authority to take any disease control measure appropriate to protect the public from the spread of infectious disease. *See* 35 P.S. § 521.5; 71 P.S. § 532(a), and 1403(a); 28 Pa. Code § 27.60.

Accordingly, on this date, July 1, 2020, to protect the public from the spread of COVID-19, I hereby order:

Section 1: Face Coverings Defined

"Face covering" means a covering of the nose and mouth that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is wrapped around the lower face. A "face covering" can be made of a variety of synthetic or natural fabrics, including cotton, silk, or linen. For purposes of this order, a face covering includes a plastic face shield that covers the nose and mouth. "Face coverings" may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or be improvised from household items, including but not limited to, scarfs, bandanas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels. While procedural and surgical masks intended for healthcare providers and first responders meet these requirements, such as N95 respirators, these specialized masks should be reserved for appropriate occupational and health care settings.

Section 2: Face Coverings Required

Except as provided in Section 3, individuals are required to wear face coverings if they are:

A. outdoors and unable to consistently maintain a distance of six feet from individuals who are not members of their household;

B. in any indoor location where members of the public are generally permitted;

C. waiting for, riding on, driving, or operating public transportation or paratransit or while in a taxi, private car service or ride-sharing vehicle;

D. obtaining services from the healthcare sector in settings including, but not limited to, a hospital, pharmacy, medical clinic, laboratory, physician or dental office, veterinary clinic, or blood bank; or

E. engaged in work, whether at the workplace or performing work off-site, when interacting in-person with any member of the public, working in any space visited by members of the public, working in any space where food is prepared or packaged for sale or distribution to others, working in or walking through common areas, or in any room or enclosed area where other people, except for members of the person's own household or residence, are present when unable to physically distance.

Section 3: Exceptions to Face Covering Requirement

A. The following are exceptions to the face covering requirement in Section 2:

i. Individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, mental health condition, or disability;

ii. Individuals for whom wearing a mask while working would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines;

iii. Individuals who would be unable to remove a mask without assistance;

iv. Individuals who are under two years of age;

v. Individuals who are communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired or has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication;

B. Individuals are not required to show documentation that an exception applies.

Section 4: Prior Orders

This Order is intended to be read in concert with my Order Relating to Public Health Safety Measures for Businesses Permitted to Maintain In-person Operations, dated April 15, 2020, and with the Governor's and my Orders for the Continued Reopening of the Commonwealth, dated May 27, 2020.

Section 5: Effective Date

This Order is effective immediately and will remain in effect until further notice.

Rachel Levine, MD
Secretary of Health