



CITY OF BEND

August 9, 2021

Dear County Commissioners,

We are writing to you today to urge you to fulfill your roles as public health leaders and join us in informing our community of the imperative need for everyone to wear masks indoors in public spaces or anywhere else the risk of transmitting Covid-19 is high. The recent increase of Covid-19 cases in our community has been substantial and alarming. As you know, the case counts have doubled every week since July 18, and on August 9, the St. Charles Health System reported 33 Covid-19 patients, 5 of whom are in the ICU, with 3 on ventilators.

Troublingly, the newest infection rates are due to a different variant than we were seeing previously. According to sequencing work performed by Oregon State University, in conjunction with our public health officials, a unique variant of concern appeared in Deschutes County in late June. We agree with their conclusion that this indicates the presence of the Delta variant in our community — a powerful mutation of Covid-19 that has a higher viral load (meaning a greater amount of the virus is present in the nose and mouth) and, accordingly, a much faster infectious period. The concise message here is that, without prompt intervention, this variant could spread more efficiently and completely across our population.

We are acutely aware of St. Charles' staffing shortages, and we recognize the critical need to support our local health care workers through this time. Beyond that, we also realize our collective responsibility in ensuring that our hospital system is ready and able to deliver care to all of our community members.

In sum, due to the substantial increase in Covid-19 cases, the presence of this new variant in our County, and the impacted status of our local

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hospital system, we implore the Deschutes County Commission to mandate mask-wearing for all indoor, public spaces (or, at the very least, empower your public health department to make a strong recommendation). As local elected leaders, we must be united in taking action to reduce the spread of Covid-19. In your role as directors of the public health authority of our County, we look to you take the actions necessary to prevent illness and death from this disease, and we will support you in those actions. The welfare of our businesses, restaurants, and, most importantly, our community members, depends upon our leadership.

The City of Bend, like the rest of Deschutes County, is exhausted by the continual presence (and disturbing new activity) of this virus. The call to act, though, resounds clearly through the recent public health data; we stand with our County leadership in making a decision that puts the needs of community first and foremost.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.