



January 7, 2022

Dear Members of the Salt Lake County Council,

As you know, the County and State are experiencing unprecedented numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths, and our hospitals have reached full capacity. It is our shared responsibility as leaders to protect every life we can, so I write to you today to urge you to support the enactment of a life-saving county-wide mask requirement in public spaces during the next several weeks.

Cases are exploding in Utah and health experts warn that we have yet to see the peak from the Omicron surge. The seven-day average of positive cases in the County on December 26th was 450, which increased to 1450 by January 2nd. Based on the data Dr. Dunn shared with you this past Tuesday, case counts on the east side of the county are increasing tremendously, and this trend will flow westward in coming weeks. Sixty-five percent of the County's eligible population has not received a booster shot, leaving our hospitals bracing for a surge that will be difficult if not impossible to adequately address. Hospitalization of residents from the western and southern parts of the County are already high, and this week we've seen our health care providers announce the need to defer non-essential health procedures due to staffing shortages. I'm also closely watching the trend across the nation of city mayors being forced to declare states of emergency due to staffing shortages in their public safety departments. Community spread impacts every function of our government, and as public officials, we have a responsibility to keep our employees safe.

A countywide requirement will do significantly more to protect our constituents than a mask requirement in Salt Lake City alone, both in reducing community transmission during the highly contagious Omicron wave, and in protecting the heroic medical staff at our overwhelmed hospitals. If we do not take this step for them now, there may not be enough healthy doctors and nurses on duty to take care of our constituents when this wave crests in a few weeks.

Please do all in your power to protect our residents, our healthcare and frontline workers, and keep schools and businesses open by temporarily requiring masks in public spaces countywide. We all want a return to normal, and keeping as many people out of the hospital as possible is a very simple way to help us get there.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration, and I look forward to your speedy response.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erin Mendenhall".

Mayor Erin Mendenhall