

Dear Commissioners:

It is our understanding that you are meeting on Thursday, October 20, 2020 to discuss “Commissioner message to citizens with regard to COVID”. We wanted to outline, clearly, what important points we believe such a message should include. Since we last wrote to you, the number of cases of Covid-19 have consistently risen, so much so that Montana is now on the list of worrisome states according to the White House (CDC.gov, State Report for Montana, October 11, 2020). Cases in Ravalli County have also risen and do not show signs of slowing down. Although “armchair” scientists still want to debate whether the disease is deadly, we don’t see those discussions as useful. We take our lead from actual scientists and think that you all should do the same. In that light, here is what we know and believe you do/should know:

- Covid-19 is easily passed from person to person (Citations too numerous to note)
- Covid-19 transmission is more likely due to aerosolized droplets, rather than from surfaces (Transmission of SARS-CoV-2: A Review of Viral, Host, and Environmental Factors. Ann Internal Medicine, 2020)
- Wearing masks decreases the transmission of Covid-19 (One example of MANY: MMWR Article: No Transmission of Symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 After Significant Exposure With Universal Face Mask Use at a Hair Salon – Springfield, Missouri, May 2020)
- Although the death rate may be slowing slightly, we are still learning about long term complications of Covid-19 (MedicalNewsToday.com, 9/29/20) and witnessing rare, but horrifying complications (First case of COVID-related condition surfaces in Montana, Great Falls Tribune, 8/29/20)

If you decide to approve a message to the Citizens of Ravalli County with regard to Covid, it should acknowledge those points first and foremost. As health care providers in your county, we think your message must include the following: Wear A Mask. We don’t want the Commissioners to become the mask police. We know that the Montana Code Annotated puts enforcement of public health in the hands of the Public Health Department or the County Attorney. We expect you to encourage the citizens of your county to follow the science. Your failure to support science, as well as the Governor’s directive (Office of the Governor, Covid19.mt.gov, July 15, 2020) creates confusion, distrust of government and, ultimately, interferes with economic recovery. Wearing masks doesn’t hurt anyone; if you have ever had surgery, it was done by a physician wearing a mask. Your previous statements have allowed the idea that masks don’t work and may be harmful to flourish in our county. We certainly did not want to have the New York Times do an article on our county for this reason (New York Times, October 19, 2020). Now is the time to be leaders, not politicians, and help us slow down the tide of disease for the health of all Ravalli County.

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