

## PRESS RELEASE



### Update on Mask Emergency Ordinance

**December 3, 2021**

On October 14, by a vote of 9-2, the Anchorage Assembly enacted an emergency ordinance to require masks in indoor public places. At that time, local hospitals were overwhelmed and case rates were the highest Anchorage had seen in the entire pandemic. Since then, hospitals have recovered capacity and case rates have decreased.

If this trend continues, the threshold for the emergency ordinance to expire will likely be met by next week. Therefore, emergency ordinance co-sponsors Assembly Members Meg Zaletel and Pete Petersen are preparing to introduce a resolution at the December 7 Assembly Meeting to end the mask requirement. If the expiration threshold is met and the resolution passes, masks will not be required for indoor public spaces starting December 8.

“We thank the community for your hard work to protect our city against this public health crisis,” said Petersen. “We couldn’t have done this without everyone—medical professionals, business owners, employees and individuals—coming together and each making a sacrifice for the greater good of our community.”

Zaletel added “We had alarming rates of transmission, a mask requirement and other health recommendations were put into place, and the rates came down. Masks are a simple, cheap and highly effective way to combat this virus, so even though they are no longer mandatory, they are still strongly recommended for indoor public areas. With the new omicron variant lurking on the horizon, we still need to exercise caution and good health practices.”

Assembly Members are watching how the omicron variant affects hospitals and businesses, and may enact new COVID mitigations in the future if warranted. The Assembly’s COVID-19 Mitigation is still in effect and masks or face shields are required in the Assembly Chambers during Assembly meetings.

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