

# Green Bay hospitals call on city leaders to adopt mandatory mask ordinance

Doug Schneider, Green Bay Press-Gazette (July 16, 2020)

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GREEN BAY - The heads of five hospitals operating in Green Bay are calling on local government to require people 2 years old and older to cover their faces in indoor areas accessible to the public, and when riding in public buses.

As the number of COVID-19 cases in Brown County and Wisconsin continued to climb, leaders at Aurora BayCare Medical Center, BayCare Clinic, Bellin Health, HSHS St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, HSHS St. Vincent Hospital and Prevea Health took the unusual step of urging Green Bay's mayor and City Council to require the use of face masks in the city.

"Our ability to provide health care for all people of the region would be impaired if the number of COVID-19 cases requiring hospitalization exceeds our capacity," they wrote. "COVID-19 continues as a threat to the health of our region."

The group plans to make the same request of the Brown County Board, said Christine Woleske, Bellin Health president and CEO.

Exceptions should be allowed for people eating or drinking in a restaurant or bar, according to the hospital officials. In addition, mask use would not be required of people who have trouble breathing or struggle with loss of consciousness, incapacitation, or inability to remove the mask without help.

At Wednesday's County Board meeting, Woleske appealed to people's sense of decency in choosing to cover their noses and mouths, saying she wears a face mask for three reasons: humility, kindness and community.

The virus that causes COVID-19 has infected 3,348 people in Brown County, including 44 people who have died from the disease. The number of people hospitalized at Bellin in the past week has doubled, Wolesky said.

Still, the debate over a need for a mask requirement continues.

Many opponents say they should be allowed to make their own choices about whether to wear a mask, and despite agreement among health authorities from hospital officials to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some people challenge the science behind the call for masks. Most speakers at Wednesday's meeting wore masks; board members were more evenly split regarding mask use.