

The Honorable Chair Michelle Steel  
Orange County Board of Supervisors  
10 Civic Center Plaza  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

June 11, 2020

Dear Honorable Chair Steel,

CHOC Children's has been watching with deep concern the escalating debate that has worked its way across our country, into our neighborhoods and onto the floor of our Board of Supervisors. Every week, as local case counts steadily rise along with hospitalizations due to COVID-19, we see Orange County residents line up to voice their arguments against public health precautions to prevent the spread of disease. The recent resignation of Dr. Nichole Quick, after months of relentless questioning, distrust and even threats to her safety, indicates a level of public disrespect for medical science that we believe puts Orange County at serious risk.

We at CHOC firmly believe in the efficacy of mask wearing, along with other measures, to inhibit the transmission of infection and protect the health of our community. We took action months ago to require mask wearing for everyone on our campus, and we are seeing positive outcomes as a result.

"I wear a mask to protect you, and you wear a mask to protect me," is a frequent refrain within our organization. We encourage you to reflect on the spirit of this commitment – to accept minor personal sacrifice to serve the greater good – as a perspective our leaders should be advocating.

We have limited weapons in our arsenal to fight this pandemic. One of them is the imposition of "stay at home" orders. As you have correctly opined, we cannot continue to allow the economic ravages of COVID-19, including unemployment, housing and food insecurity, to continue unchecked. Safe reopening is critical, and mask wearing is among the limited remaining tools at our disposal to protect ourselves and one another from rapid escalation of disease.

We fear two likely outcomes if our community continues to reject the necessity of mask wearing:

1. Businesses will fail to attract enough customers to remain viable if nervous residents do not see that common-sense infection prevention practices, including mask wearing, are honored in shops, restaurants and other locations.
2. Lax public health measures will lead to rapidly rising COVID-19 caseloads and hospitalizations, potentially triggering widespread closures shortly following reopening.

Clearly, neither of these outcomes are acceptable.

We urge our leaders to immediately adopt and communicate a more carefully calibrated message urging Orange County residents and visitors to observe our Health Officer's May 28 order regarding the wearing of cloth face coverings. We understand this position will not be popular among all residents, but we have faith that a substantial, though quiet, majority will be reassured that their health and safety remain top priorities for their local leaders.

We need your leadership, and we pledge our support.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Chavalas Cripe  
Chief Executive Officer



Katherine Andreeff, M.D.  
President, CHOC Medical Staff



Charles Golden, M.D.  
Vice President, Executive Medical Director  
CHOC Primary Care Network



Melanie Patterson, R.N.  
Chief Nursing Officer

cc: The Honorable Vice Chair Andrew Do  
cc: The Honorable Lisa Bartlett  
cc: The Honorable Don Wagner  
cc: The Honorable Doug Chaffee  
cc: CEO Frank Kim  
cc: Whitney Ayers, HASC