



An Open Letter to Iowa State Legislators

January 14, 2021

Dear Iowa State Senators and Representatives,

As you return to your work at the Iowa State Capitol and debate the issues most critical to the health, security, and economic sustainability of Iowans, Iowa Public Health Association welcomes you back and asks that you accept your position of critical role models to the people of Iowa.

As you know, we are still in the midst of a pandemic that has, at the time of writing, cost 4,251 Iowan lives. By the time you read this, that number will have grown and more families will be mourning the loss of cherished loved ones. We applaud your decision to protect Capitol visitors by opening your proceedings to the public via livestream platforms. Accessibility to you and transparency in decision making is a hallmark of our democracy.

We are concerned, however, at the lack of protections from COVID-19 by not requiring masks of legislators, staff, and visitors. The evidence is clear that masks are a critical component of a comprehensive mitigation strategy; there is no rationale for the State Capitol to be excluded from Governor Reynolds' proclamation "*...that all people two or older must wear a mask or other face covering when inside an indoor space that is open to the public...*" We are gravely concerned about events at the Capitol contributing to the spread of the pandemic and ask for your leadership in setting the tone that while free speech will not be suppressed, public health precautions must be taken.

We know from clear public health evidence that the virus spreads quickly through social gatherings and close contacts and that masks provide a layer of protection, along with social distancing and handwashing. Vaccines are being administered and are another layer of protection. It will still be many months before all who want the vaccine are able to receive it. In the meantime, we need to do everything we can to continue to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and lessen the impact it has on our communities and economy. We hope that you will lead by example and always wear a mask during your work at the Capitol and ask others to do the same.

We are hopeful that we are in the waning phases of this pandemic. The light at the end of the tunnel is there and glowing brighter every day. But the tunnel is long, and we need to do all that we can to get everyone through. Together, we can better ensure a healthy and thriving Iowa.

As always, please regard Iowa Public Health Association as a resource to you and your staff as you consider issues of public health importance to Iowans. The public health community across the state are the highest caliber of professionals, dedicated to a healthy and thriving Iowa. Thank you for your service to the people of Iowa.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lina Tucker Reinders'.

Lina Tucker Reinders, MPH
Executive Director | Member | Sustaining Donor

Leader[s] in Health Equity

501 SW 7th St., Ste. G • Des Moines, IA 50309 • 515.491.7804 • iowapha.org