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## COVID-19 and the Conundrum of Mask Requirements

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# COVID-19 and the Conundrum of Mask Requirements

By Robert Gatter\* and Seema Mohapatra\*\*

## *Abstract*

*As states begin to loosen their COVID-19 restrictions, public debate is underway about what public health measures are appropriate. Many states have some form of mask-wearing orders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection. Public health guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization has conflicted. From a public health point of view, it is not clear what the right answer is. In the absence of directives, individuals are also making their own choices about mask use. At a time when public health measures, like shelter-in-place orders and social distancing, are being used to stop the spread of coronavirus, wearing masks can be seen as a form of solidarity and desire not to infect others. Similarly, not wearing a mask can also be a political statement of sorts. Additionally, black men wearing masks have reported being asked to leave stores and fearing for their own safety. This Article provides an overview of the legal and policy landscape and focuses on the potential for policing against black Americans when mask mandates are in place. Despite the public health benefits of mask usage, due to mask mandates likely being enforced discriminatorily, we advise caution against mask mandates.*

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*I. Introduction*

Ohio governor Mike DeWine announced on April 27, 2020 that everyone in Ohio’s stores would soon be required to wear masks for the protection of others.<sup>1</sup> Public backlash was immediate. The very next day, he reversed himself and canceled the order.<sup>2</sup> A nearly identical story unfolded later the same week in Stillwater, Oklahoma. City officials announced that shoppers would be required to wear masks and then withdrew the order, citing threats of violence against store employees.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, mask-wearing orders have stuck in several other states—including Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.<sup>4</sup> Some states mandate masks as an additional social distancing

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1. See Rishika Dugyala, *Gov. DeWine: My Face Mask Order Went ‘Too Far’*, POLITICO (May 3, 2020, 10:10 AM), <https://perma.cc/8QJ9-RBCV> (last visited May 27, 2020) (“DeWine announced April 27 that face masks must be worn in stores—but after some Ohioans found the order ‘offensive,’ he reversed himself the next day.”) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

2. *Id.*

3. Hannah Knowles & Marissa Iati, *Oklahoma City Backs Off Mask Mandate After Public Threats, as Officials Struggle to Enforce Public Health Rules*, WASH. POST (May 3, 2020, 10:00 PM), <https://perma.cc/X9CU-TUDX> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

4. Scottie Andrew & James Froio, *These Are the States That Require You to Wear a Mask in Public*, CNN, <https://perma.cc/J5HA-XHUU> (last updated Apr. 20, 2020, 7:49 PM) (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

requirement, and others require masks only when one cannot maintain a six-foot distance from others in a public place.<sup>5</sup>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a recommendation in early April that individuals wear a mask when in public, reversing its earlier statement that only those sick or caring for someone with COVID-19 should wear masks.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the CDC's new recommendation stopped short of proposing that state and local officials mandate masks in public. The World Health Organization still does not recommend wearing a mask unless symptomatic or taking care of someone who is symptomatic.<sup>7</sup>

From a public health point of view, it is not clear what the right answer is. Some jurisdictions require everyone to wear masks in public places. Others recommend masks and leave it to each person to choose. Still others have been silent on mask use. This leaves states and localities to their own discretion about how to proceed.

In the absence of directives, individuals are also making their own choices about mask use. At a time when public health measures, like shelter-in-place orders and social distancing, are being used to stop the spread of coronavirus, wearing masks can be seen as a form of solidarity and desire to not infect others.<sup>8</sup>

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5. See *id.* (comparing for instance, Connecticut, where residents are required to wear masks when maintaining six feet of distance is impossible, with Hawaii, where residents are required to wear masks regardless of ability to social distance).

6. See Catherine Marfin, *Why Did the Recommendation on Wearing Face Masks Change? Curious Texas Investigates*, DALL. MORNING NEWS (Apr. 8, 2020, 3:00 PM), <https://perma.cc/6QMM-W2ZG> (last visited May 27, 2020) (noting the reversal in position at the CDC regarding recommending everyone wear a mask “where social distancing is difficult,” rather than just those exhibiting symptoms or caring for the sick) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

7. *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Advice for the Public: When and How to Use Masks*, WORLD HEALTH ORG., <https://perma.cc/EZK7-T6JS> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

8. See *Face Masks Make a Political Statement in Era of Coronavirus*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REP. (May 7, 2020, 3:21 PM), <https://perma.cc/UST8-XQDN> (last visited May 27, 2020) (noting New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's use of moral arguments, including phrases such as, “How people cannot wear masks—that to me is even disrespectful”) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

Similarly, not wearing a mask can also be a political statement of sorts.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, black men wearing masks have reported being asked to leave stores and fearing for their own safety.<sup>10</sup> There also have been reports of employers not allowing their employees to wear masks because of worries that it makes customers uncomfortable.<sup>11</sup> We, as public health law experts, provide some analysis and recommendations.

## II. *The Public Health Case for Requiring Masks*

Although the science is not yet crystal clear, there are good reasons to believe that wearing masks when out of one's home and in an indoor space is effective at preventing the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.<sup>12</sup> The CDC says that the virus is "spread mainly from person to person," primarily "[t]hrough respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks."<sup>13</sup> Infected droplets can land in the mouth of another nearby person, or they can land on a surface that another person touches with their hand before touching their nose or mouth, or another person can breathe in

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9. See Connor Friedersdorf, *Masks Are a Tool, Not a Symbol*, ATLANTIC (May 5, 2020), <https://perma.cc/AQG6-XA65> (last visited May 27, 2020) (arguing that conservatives, following the lead of pundits—such as Laura Ingraham and Rush Limbaugh—refuse to wear masks to make an ideological statement) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

10. Marc Fisher, Clarence Williams & Lori Rozsa, *Will Americans Wear Masks to Prevent Coronavirus Spread? Politics, History, Race, and Crime Factor into Tough Decision*, WASH. POST (Apr. 18, 2020, 11:21 PM), <https://perma.cc/TG3M-7WM9> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

11. See, e.g., *Reopened Restaurant Told Workers: Don't Wear Face Masks—or Don't Work*, CBS NEWS (May 7, 2020, 6:44 AM), <https://perma.cc/C84W-QVQJ> (last visited May 27, 2020) (describing a restaurant in Dallas, Texas that forbid its employees from wearing masks while working, and if an employee declined, they would not be eligible for rehire) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

12. *SARS-CoV-2 Viral Culture at CDC*, CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION, <https://perma.cc/5VQX-URH4> (last updated May 5, 2020) (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

13. *How COVID-19 Spreads*, CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION, <https://perma.cc/VG4H-YLND> (last updated Apr. 13, 2020) (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

the virus from the air around them.<sup>14</sup> How far the virus can travel in the air is an open question. Initially, experts believed that SARS-CoV-2 was too heavy to be airborne, but a recent study establishing that viral particles were in the air around two hospitals in Wuhan, China has shed some doubt on that theory.<sup>15</sup>

During a pandemic, when officials are seeking to reduce COVID-19 infections, it is reasonable for them to account for the possibility that the virus is airborne. If an individual infectious with SARS-CoV-2 wears a mask, then the droplets they expel from talking, laughing, coughing, or sneezing may be largely contained within the mask. In this way, a mask may help prevent all of the methods of transmission, including possibly airborne transmission.

A mask requirement may also be prudent because infected individuals can transmit the virus to others even when they do not look or feel sick.<sup>16</sup> Because tests for the virus have been in short supply in the U.S.,<sup>17</sup> and often limited to those who have symptoms and those caring for individuals actively sick with COVID-19,<sup>18</sup> we cannot know who among the apparently

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14. *Id.*

15. Kenneth Chang, *Airborne Coronavirus Detected in Wuhan Hospitals*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 28, 2020), <https://perma.cc/4VAA-BPQE> (last updated May 14, 2020) (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

16. *Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission*, CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION, <https://perma.cc/32YK-DMJT> (last updated Apr. 3, 2020) (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

17. See Michael D. Shear et al., *The Lost Month: How a Failure to Test Blinded the U.S. to Covid-19*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 28, 2020), <https://perma.cc/W4P3-J7TC> (last updated Apr. 1, 2020) (last visited May 27, 2020) (describing the lack of testing at the outset of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

18. See Steve Thompson, Juliet Eilperin, & Brady Dennis, *As Coronavirus Testing Expands, a New Problem Arises: Not Enough People to Test*, WASH. POST (May 17, 2020, 4:19 P.M.), <https://perma.cc/2FU9-UBC2> (last visited May 27, 2020) (articulating that while states now have ample testing capacity, only a fraction of the tests are being used due to a misconception that only those with symptoms should be tested) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

healthy is nonetheless infectious with SARS-CoV-2.<sup>19</sup> If everyone who feels healthy were to wear masks when out in public, those masks could help prevent the asymptomatic infection of others.<sup>20</sup>

Empirical evidence also supports mask-wearing requirements. Recent systematic reviews suggest that masks work to contain the droplets of individuals infected with SARS-CoV-2 when they talk, cough, or sneeze<sup>21</sup> and thus work to lower the risk of transmission to others.<sup>22</sup> Yet, science has not conclusively established whether or not homemade cloth masks effectively stop the spread of the virus.<sup>23</sup> There are also systematic reviews of masks that pre-date this pandemic, which show that masks are effective at preventing the spread of other similar viruses.<sup>24</sup>

If, when assessing whether to require that everyone wear masks in public, officials considered only whether masks may reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2, then perhaps their decision would be easy. If masks can help contain the spread, let's require them. This may be tempting as stay-at-home orders are lifted and public health experts brace for spikes in infection. Yet,

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19. See *supra* note 16 and accompanying text.

20. See *supra* note 16 and accompanying text.

21. See C. Raina MacIntyre & Abrar Ahmad Chughtai, *A Rapid Systemic Review of the Efficacy of Face Masks and Respirators Against Coronaviruses and Other Respiratory Transmissible Viruses for the Community, Healthcare Workers and Sick Patients*, INT'L J. NURSING STUD. (forthcoming 2020) (supporting the hypothesis that masks reduce the risk of person-to-person spread of COVID-19).

22. See Mingming Liang et al., *Efficacy of Face Mask in Preventing Respiratory Virus Transmission: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*, MEDRXIV (forthcoming 2020) ("Meta-analyses suggest that mask use provided a significant protective effect . . .").

23. See NAT'L ACADEMIES OF SCI., ENGINEERING, AND MED., RAPID EXPERT CONSULTATION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FABRIC MASKS FOR THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC 6 (2020) (noting the lack of evidence that homemade fabric masks effectively protect against the spread of the virus).

24. See generally B.J. Cowling et al., *Face Masks to Prevent Transmission of Influenza Virus: A Systematic Review*, 138 EPIDEMIOLOGY & INFECTION 449 (2010); Faisal bin-Reza et al., *The Use of Masks and Respirators to Prevent Transmission of Influenza: A Systematic Review of the Scientific Evidence*, 6 INFLUENZA & OTHER RESPIRATORY VIRUSES 257 (2011).

efficacy—despite its fundamental value in public health decision-making—should not be the only consideration.

### *III. Masks and Racial Discrimination*

Black Americans risk being targeted by law enforcement, the employees of retail establishments, or their own neighbors for wearing masks. Numerous news outlets report racial discrimination by police related to mask-wearing during this pandemic. For example, Kam Buckner, a black man and Illinois State Representative, was stopped by a Chicago police officer after shopping while wearing a facial mask.<sup>25</sup> The officer asked to see Rep. Buckner's ID and store receipt.<sup>26</sup> When the state legislator asked the officer why he was stopped and questioned, Buckner says the officer answered, "I can't see your face man [a]nd you look like you may be up to something."<sup>27</sup>

A letter signed by Senators Kamala Harris and Corey Booker, among others, chronicles several other incidents of racial discrimination against black men for wearing or failing to wear masks.<sup>28</sup> One involved a masked black male physician who was unloading medical supplies from his car to care for homeless people in Miami and was handcuffed and detained by police.<sup>29</sup> *The New York Times* reported on several black men who are fearful of racial profiling when they decide to leave home wearing a mask.<sup>30</sup>

Suspicion and policing of black men due to mask use is particularly offensive given that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately harmed black communities. According to

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25. Kam Buckner, *State Rep. Says He Was Stopped by CPD Officer After Shopping at Store While Wearing Mask, Gloves*, NBC CHI. (May 5, 2020, 10:41 PM), <https://perma.cc/2V5D-DSGH> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

26. *Id.*

27. *Id.*

28. Letter from Kamala Harris et al., U.S. Senators, U.S. Senate, to William Barr, Att'y Gen., U.S. Dep't of Justice, and Christopher Wray, Dir., Fed. Bureau of Investigation (Apr. 17, 2020), <https://perma.cc/5UA3-7R5Q>.

29. *Id.*

30. Derrick Bryson Taylor, *For Black Men, Fear that Masks Will Invite Racial Profiling*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 14, 2020), <https://perma.cc/P9X4-F493> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).



estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, black Americans make up about 46% of the population in St. Louis, Missouri,<sup>31</sup> but they account for more than 65% of COVID-19 cases and 69% of COVID-19 deaths in the city.<sup>32</sup> In Chicago, a black resident is more than twice as likely as a white resident to become infected with the virus and nearly two and a half times as likely to die of COVID-19.<sup>33</sup>

Wearing a mask is particularly valuable in preventing the spread of the virus in communities where it is more prevalent, and yet doing so increases the risk of racial discrimination. “In essence, black men have to pick their poison—risk their lives (and the lives of others) to C[OVID]-19 by not wearing a mask, [or] risk their lives to police officers who see them as suspicious while wearing a mask . . . .”<sup>34</sup>

In states where there are laws permitting citizens arrests and forms of vigilantism, there is a concern for safety for those black people following public health advice. This risk is a new pandemic-engendered aspect of what has been termed “Living While Black”—the risk that whites call the police on black people for engaging in everyday activities.<sup>35</sup> With the advent of wide-spread access to cell phone cameras and social media platforms, these incidents have given rise to their own viral hashtag: #LivingWhileBlack.<sup>36</sup>

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31. *QuickFacts, St. Louis City, Missouri (County)*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (July 1, 2019), <https://perma.cc/4X57-UD5X> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

32. *COVID-19 Demographic Data*, CITY OF ST. LOUIS DEP’T OF HEALTH, <https://perma.cc/GMR2-B47V> (last updated May 18, 2020) (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

33. *Latest Data*, CITY OF CHI., <https://perma.cc/3QX5-HD9P> (last updated May 19, 2020) (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

34. Fabiola Cineas, *Senators Are Demanding a Solution To Police Stopping Black Men for Wearing—and Not Wearing—Masks*, VOX (Apr 22, 2020, 2:10 PM), <https://perma.cc/AS7B-P59L> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

35. Taja-Nia Y. Henderson & Jamila Jefferson-Jones, *#LivingWhileBlack: Blackness as Nuisance*, 69 AM. U. L. REV. 863, 867–68 (2020).

36. See, e.g., Jaweed Kaleem, *#LivingWhileBlack: New Laws Could Outlaw Racially Motivated 911 Calls*, VOX (May 27, 2019, 3:00 AM), <https://perma.cc/W6A2-C759> (last visited May 27, 2020) (discussing the social media

Black Americans are being infected and dying at a higher rate, despite surveys showing that they are more concerned about the virus and are taking precautions more seriously than white counterparts.<sup>37</sup> The greater concern may lead to more black Americans wearing masks if it is known to reduce infection, if—that is—fear of policing was not an issue. Perhaps a mask mandate would cause less stigma about people wearing masks because almost everyone would be wearing masks. However, there is a concern that law enforcement would use mask-wearing or lack of mask-wearing as a proxy to carry out racial profiling.

#### *IV. The Law as an Unreliable Check on Discrimination During a Pandemic*

Of course, racial discrimination is illegal, and prosecutors and private litigants are empowered by the law to pursue a remedy for such discrimination. Thus, in theory, the law is a check against any racial discrimination that might result from a mask requirement. And yet there is good reason to believe that the law will not be an effective check against racial discrimination by police when enforcing such a requirement.

First, in an effort to help prevent the spread of the virus, courts are less accessible than they would be during normal times.<sup>38</sup> Thus, a private litigant seeking redress for racial discrimination by police in relation to a state or local mask requirement may find it difficult to be heard in a timely manner.<sup>39</sup> And, of course, justice delayed is justice denied.

Second, courts are deferential to the actions of state and local officials during a public health emergency. Not only do

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movement surrounding #LivingWhileBlack) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

37. *Health Concerns from COVID-19 Much Higher Among Hispanics and Blacks than Whites*, PEW RES. CTR. (Apr. 14, 2020), <https://perma.cc/K5PB-8WP5> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

38. *See, e.g.*, Cheryl Miller, *How COVID-19 Is Impacting California Courts: Roundup of Services*, LAW.COM, <https://perma.cc/2DZG-KH34> (last updated May 18, 2020) (last visited May 27, 2020) (detailing the many restrictions on access to California courts as the crisis continues to unfold) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

39. *Id.*

judges defer to the expertise and judgment of officials, but they tend to cut officials a great deal of slack for having to make judgments quickly and under substantial pressure as a result of an emergency. Moreover, the tendency of courts to defer to officials also results in judges adopting unusually deferential standards of review, which they justify as appropriate in the face of an emergency.

For example, in early April, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit granted a writ of mandamus ordering a lower court to vacate its preliminary injunction prohibiting the enforcement against abortion providers of a Texas policy forbidding doctors and hospitals from performing non-life-saving procedures.<sup>40</sup> In its opinion, the Fifth Circuit claimed that *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*,<sup>41</sup> a Supreme Court opinion written decades before the development of modern substantive due process standards, controlled and that *Jacobson* requires only a showing that the Texas ban on non-life-saving medical procedures had a “real and substantial relation” to the state’s interest in responding to the pandemic.<sup>42</sup> The court found that such a relation existed because the Texas ban was designed to preserve medical resources for COVID-19 patients.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the Fifth Circuit side-stepped the caselaw that imposes a more demanding “undue burden” standard on state actions related to abortions, and the court did so by claiming that *Jacobson* creates a special standard for public health emergencies like this pandemic.<sup>44</sup>

The Fifth Circuit is not alone in lowering the judicial standard of review during a public health crisis. The Superior Court of New Hampshire, in *Binford v. Sununu*,<sup>45</sup> rejected constitutional challenges to the Governor’s order that effectively

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40. *In re Abbott*, 954 F.3d 772, 778 (5th Cir. 2020).

41. 197 U.S. 11 (1905).

42. *In re Abbott*, 754 F.3d at 778–87.

43. *Id.* at 787.

44. *Id.* at 785–86.

45. *Binford v. Sununu*, No. 217-2020-CV-00152 (N.H. Super. Ct. dismissed Mar. 25, 2020).

shut down certain businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>46</sup> The state court held that, during an emergency, a Governor may suspend civil rights temporarily.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the court held that state actions are reviewed merely to determine that the state had a factual basis for deeming its actions as necessary and that those actions were not taken in bad faith.<sup>48</sup> Very few, if any, governmental actions would fail such a lenient test.

Private litigants seeking injunctive relief or compensation for racial discrimination at the hands of police ostensibly enforcing a mask requirement are likely to be disappointed. Deferential judges deploying lenient standards of review and opining that civil liberties take a back seat to civil order during an emergency are not likely to put police in their place. Additionally, as the examples of Ahmaud Arbery and Trayvon Martin demonstrate, white citizens may use their concerns about safety to take the law into their own hands.<sup>49</sup>

#### *V. Solving the Conundrum*

There isn't a perfect answer to the question of whether states and localities should require that individuals wear masks in public or merely recommend that they do. Indeed, the issue is complicated. On the one hand, a mask requirement, while potentially effective, very likely will lead to unchecked racial discrimination and add to the unfair burden of this pandemic on

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46. Objection to "Emergency Motion for Preliminary Injunction and Permanent Injunction", *Binford v. Sununu*, No. 217-2020-CV-00152 (N.H. Super. Ct. Mar. 19, 2020).

47. *Binford*, No. 217-2020-CV-00152, at \*11 (N.H. Super. Ct. dismissed Mar. 25, 2020) (analyzing precedent in concluding that the Governor had some authority to suspend civil liberties in times of emergency).

48. *Id.* at \*13 (applying the Eleventh Circuit's two-prong test which includes a review of "whether the executive's actions were taken in good faith and whether there is some factual basis for the decision that the restrictions imposed were necessary to maintain order" (internal quotations omitted)).

49. See Frances Robles, *The Citizen's Arrest Law Cited in Arbery's Killing Dates Back to the Civil War*, N.Y. TIMES (May 13, 2020), <https://perma.cc/J22A-WXPM> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review); Adrienne Chudzinski, *The Ahmaud Arbery Case Exposes the Failures of the Criminal Justice System*, WASH. POST (May 9, 2020, 6:00 AM), <https://perma.cc/VH2A-MFWP> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

racial minorities, especially black Americans. On the other hand, a mask recommendation is unlikely to result in a sufficient percentage of the population wearing masks so as to slow the spread of the virus as businesses re-open. In fact, some studies indicate that, in order to slow the spread, at least 70% of the population must be wearing masks.<sup>50</sup> Encouraging voluntary mask use may result in less compliance but would avoid the unintended consequences of punitive measures. In some countries, social norms are such that this percentage can be achieved in the absence of legal mandates.<sup>51</sup> In the United States, however, it is unlikely that such compliance will be achieved without laws and orders requiring masks.

As public health law experts, we have considered the scientific, legal, and ethical issues surrounding mask use, weighing the public health evidence, potential for stigma and racial profiling and policing, and the politics of mask use. We conclude that, on balance, a mask recommendation is the better solution for now. It captures some of the public health benefits without the need for an enforcement mechanism that is so likely to result in additional discrimination. If, in response to a recommendation, most of the population wear masks, this would be beneficial from both a public health and stigma perspective. In support of policies for voluntary mask-wearing, we also recommend increased federal funding for states and public health agencies to provide masks to the general public. Additionally, we recommend advertising campaigns to educate the public about mask use, perhaps with well-known celebrities and those of all political stripes, so as to help normalize mask-wearing. This has a value not only today but also as we anticipate future disease events. Moreover, solidarity is necessary for public health measures, such as mask use and social distancing, to work. If a public mask recommendation encourages more people to wear masks, people are less likely to

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50. Jeremy Howard et al., *Face Masks Against COVID-19: An Evidence Review* (May 13, 2020) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

51. Lydia Denworth, *Masks Reveal New Social Norms: What a Difference a Plague Makes*, *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* (May 14, 2020), <https://perma.cc/Z8VP-LE6T> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

assume those who do are sick and avoid them. Also, this would make masks less of a symbol of political affiliation.<sup>52</sup> If most people wear masks, black Americans who wear masks are less likely to be targeted.

Given the uneven policing of masking that is likely, we are hesitant to recommend mandatory masking measures. We recognize, however, that some officials will choose to enforce a mask requirement. Indeed, many cities already are mandating masks.<sup>53</sup> While we believe that the likelihood of increased racial discrimination undercuts the public health justification for a mask requirement, we also recognize that states and localities adopting such requirements can take additional steps to mitigate the likely discriminatory effects. We urge that any mask mandates *not* include any fines or other punitive measures. Instead, officials can require that places of public accommodation offer masks for a nominal price at their entrance and deny entry to anyone who is not wearing a mask and who refuses to purchase one. Washington, D.C. has adopted this approach.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, any mask mandate should be accompanied by the kind of educational campaign described above.

We warn officials who insist that only the fear of a fine will encourage compliance to account for the likelihood that

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52. Fisher, Williams & Rozsa, *supra* note 10.

53. Arelis R. Hernández, *Laredo, a Key Texas Border Crossing, Uses Strict Coronavirus Measures as It Fears Spread to Rest of U.S.*, WASH. POST (Apr. 16, 2020, 6:10 PM), <https://perma.cc/9JS8-U2K5> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review). Some businesses, including big box stores like Costco, are also requiring masks for entry. See Erica Chayes Wida, *Costco Eliminates 2 Shopper Limit and Reopens Food Courts*, TODAY (May 15, 2020, 2:44 PM), <https://perma.cc/3X2W-N9Y6> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review). There have been reports of violence against employees who are trying to enforce these mask mandates. See Neil MacFarquhar, *Who's Enforcing Mask Rules? Often Retail Workers, and They're Getting Hurt*, N.Y. TIMES (May 15, 2020), <https://perma.cc/NZE7-PT9A> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review). These mandates also have the potential for discrimination, as well as Americans with Disabilities Act issues. However, these private party mandates go beyond the scope of this Article.

54. Elliot C. Williams & Matt Blitz, *D.C.'s Mayor Is Requiring People Wear Masks in Stores, But Is It a Legal Mandate?*, NAT'L PUB. RADIO (Apr. 20, 2020), <https://perma.cc/SJ8J-HKQU> (last visited May 27, 2020) (on file with the Washington and Lee Law Review).

enforcement will target black Americans. Any police encounter is fraught with fear for black Americans due to the targeting by police. For those jurisdictions criminalizing failure to use a mask, we recommend that officials collect and share publicly information about the race of individuals who police stop, question, warn, threaten, fine, or arrest for violating the mask requirement. Furthermore, we recommend that those jurisdictions educate police about biased enforcement of the requirement, that they prohibit police from treating the violation of a mask requirement as a primary offense, and that they require officers to carry supplies of masks to provide to those who are not wearing masks for a first warning.

The mask debate is raging in states and localities, in workplaces, and people's own homes. As jurisdictions lift stay-at-home orders, it may be tempting to encourage mask use via mandatory orders with fines for noncompliance. However, given the discriminatory ways such rules are likely to be enforced, it is important to proceed with caution.