



Media Release

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Rep. Shankland: Introduces Legislation to Create Statewide Mask Order

MADISON - Today, Wisconsin Legislative Democrats introduced a bill to create a new statewide mask order that would remain in effect until the conclusion of the national emergency declared by the President of the United States in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This follows the recent vote by the majority of Legislative Republicans to eliminate Governor Evers' prior statewide mask order.

Rep. Katrina Shankland (D- Stevens Point) issued the following statement in response:

"Scientists and public health professionals keep telling us that wearing a mask is one of the simplest and most effective ways to slow the transmission of COVID-19 and keep it from spreading in our communities. Yet somehow, even with new and highly transmissible variants emerging, some elected officials have chosen to politicize mask wearing. The majority of people in Wisconsin support the statewide masking order, and the vote to repeal the state mask mandate received bipartisan opposition in both the Senate and Assembly. Unfortunately, when Assembly Democratic legislators introduced an amendment during yesterday's Assembly session to provide the opportunity for us all to use our legislative authority to require masks statewide, it was shut down immediately.

"That's why today we are introducing this legislation to ensure that we have a statewide mask order in place for the remainder of the pandemic. The mask order is the only statewide public health tool we have had in our tool box throughout the most challenging part of the pandemic. Official statewide orders make a significant difference in how many people wear masks in public places, and how many businesses feel comfortable enforcing mask wearing on their premises. While local governments and individual businesses have the independent authority to require masks, a statewide order offers certainty and consistency to everyone while protecting the public health.

"While Governor Evers acted swiftly to issue a new statewide mask order when the previous one was struck down, if my colleagues in the majority choose to, they could strike the new order down again at any time. The last thing we need is for the public health to be jeopardized by this lack of certainty. If their sole concern with the governor's order is a supposed overreach of executive authority, as they claim, then there is no good reason why we shouldn't be able to pass this bill together to help protect our constituents. I encourage my Republican colleagues to join us in following science, not politics, by passing this legislation, and I stand ready to work with them to protect the public health and save lives."

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Note: A copy of the bill (LRB 1809) is attached.