

Thanks for your long emails expressing your opposition to face-mask mandates as a public health measure during the pandemic. They were extensive, with a significant number of assertions that are the center of considerable debate right now.

As with many components of this issue, I don't have 100% certainty about the best strategic and methodological approach to take—and I don't tend to trust people who claim such certainty. In my very limited role as a state legislator (during a crisis when decisions on matters like this are being made all over the country by the executive, not the legislative branch), I try to stay up with the literature, reading most links sent my way or that people suggest to me. That doesn't make me an expert, but probably does give me a broader, less ideological perspective than many. And the discussion I'm following tends to be fairly murky.

For example, the mass email I've been receiving says, "WHO stands by recommendations to not wear masks if you are not sick or caring for someone who is sick."

When I look into that (at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-who-masks-factbox/factbox-what-the-who-recommends-on-face-masks-idUSKBN23C2B1>), I find that in early June the WHO updated guidance to recommend the wearing of face masks in all public places. According to the article, "The WHO says the widespread use of face masks or coverings by the general public is still not yet supported by high quality or direct scientific evidence. But it says a growing amount of observational evidence from several countries that have ordered or recommended the wearing of masks, as well as the difficulty of social distancing in many settings, is enough for it to change its advice."

So, we're hardly in the realm of certainty here. In order to object to the kind of mask mandates that Governor Brown has set out, I'd have to put considerably more weight on the key claims in your email than on what has become, over time, consistent guidance from public health authorities. That is not where my best judgment takes me. Consequently, I won't be speaking out against face-masks or undermining current efforts to get Oregonians wearing them in indoor public spaces. I understand that's contrary to the request in your emails but would rather not dance around the issue and leave you unsure as to where I stand. I pledge to stay as current as I can on Covid-related facts and evidence, and open to revising my views as we learn more.

I'm glad you all wrote me and hope that you will again. All best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff Golden", with a checkmark to the left.

Senator Jeff Golden, Oregon Senate District 3