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Rutherford County Mayors' Caucus Shares Joint Message Concerning Face Coverings

Rutherford County, TN—Over the weekend, Dr. Michael Caldwell, Director of the Metro Public Health Department issued Public Health Order 8 that mandates the use of facial coverings or masks in Davidson County. The Order took effect Monday, June 29 at 12:01 a.m.

As a result, Mayors' offices across Rutherford County have received phone calls, emails, and social media requests to do the same. However, "It's not that easy," says Rutherford County Mayor Bill Ketron. "Under state law and Governor Lee's executive orders concerning the COVID-19 response, we do not have the authority to independently mandate the use of face masks or other face coverings except in governmental buildings or in connection with government operations."

"Governor Lee's executive order recommends, but does not require, that individuals use face masks in public places when social distancing is impracticable," said City of Murfreesboro Mayor Shane McFarland. "Rutherford County and the jurisdictions within cannot issue a public health order stricter than, or in any way different from, the Governor's order."

"What we can do is strongly recommend that businesses and individuals follow these guidelines, including wearing a face mask or some version of a face covering in public places," said Town of Smyrna Mayor Mary Esther Reed. "This protective measure, along with others such as appropriate social distancing and safety precautions consistent with CDC guidelines, are the keys to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities."

"The general decision of whether to wear a mask or face covering is left up to individuals and businesses," said City of Eagleville Mayor Chad Leeman. "Business and property owners have the ability to require visitors and patrons to wear masks while on their property, but we do not have the power to enforce those decisions."

City of La Vergne Mayor Jason Cole shared concern over the recent rise in cases, "The numbers are a reflection of our communities not being ready for 'business as usual'. We need to remain vigilant about taking these precautions as they significantly reduce our exposure to the virus."

"Although we cannot implement or enforce a mask mandate," said Ketron, "we can continue sharing safety messages with our citizens in hopes that personal and professional responsibility prevail."

"We are confident that our citizens and businesses want to get back to a state of normalcy soon. We share that sentiment," said Reed, "but it's going to take everyone doing their part."

McFarland reminds the public about the availability of free face masks at the Rutherford County Health Department, "Free masks are available at both Rutherford County Health department locations Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m."

The Mayors' Caucus collectively wants what is best for the citizens and visitors of Rutherford County. Maintain your space. Cover your face. Help us remain #RutherfordCountyStrong!