

Senator Lee,

My name is Chris Meeker and I am an emergency medicine physician and chief medical officer at Sanford Bismarck. I'm writing to recommend a do not pass on HB 1323. I've listened to the testimony today and wanted to correct some misinformation. The people testifying that masks have been proven ineffective are strongly overstating the evidence. In fact, numerous studies have supported the use face masks, so I've attached one of the most recent articles I could find that summarizes available mask studies. It is from the National Academy of Sciences, a highly respected organization with a strong basis in unbiased science. While I recommend you read as much of the article as possible, the first few paragraphs show their recommendations supporting mask use.

I could send you other articles that support the use of masks, and will happily do so if you request them. Let me support my position with one very powerful anecdote: Sanford Bismarck had ZERO positive influenza tests and had only one positive RSV test. These two viruses normally number in the hundreds to thousands every year depending on the effectiveness of the influenza vaccine and they are transmitted in substantially similar ways to the Sars-CoV-2 virus. There is little doubt that the mitigation efforts to control Covid also drove down other virus transmission. Masking is a vital component of those mitigation efforts. Experts at the CDC and other international organizations fear a resurgence of the pandemic due to variants that will eventually become the dominant strains in the US. We cannot become complacent now and let our guard down. I urge that you do not pass HB 1323 and restrict the ability to use mask mandates. I'm available to discuss in greater detail if requested. I can be reached by any of the means below.

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Meeker, MD, FACEP
chris.meeker@sanfordhealth.org
(701) 323-2601