

## Stop Permanent Masking in Michigan – MIOSHA's agenda

It is impossible not to have been impacted by the restrictions passed down by our elected and unelected officials in response to the COVID-19 crisis. In March of 2020 none of us fully realized the extent to which our daily lives would be transformed in the coming year. From “two weeks to flatten the curve,” to unending lockdowns, contact tracing, masking, social distancing, and watching loved ones die from the sidelines of hospitals and nursing homes both of COVID-19 and of other illnesses has made a tremendous impact on our society.

Now many are asking the reasonable and logical question, “How do we get back to normal?” Each time a benchmark has been set by both local and federal administrations, the bar has been pushed back and the state of emergency has been extended. Here in Michigan, the administration of these powers began with the governor, but has since been handed over to regulatory agencies, namely MDHHS (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services) and MIOSHA (Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration).

This leads to our present state of crisis in May of 2021, over a year after the original emergency declaration was enacted. Governor Whitmer has once again set a standard for reopening and even given indication that she intends to open the state fully by the end of this month! And yet, concurrently with this perceived hope of reopening, MIOSHA has proposed the extension of the emergency orders we are all currently under indefinitely.

With case numbers and deaths dropping daily nationwide, why are we now proposing permanent masking, social distancing, temperature checks, and so much more? It seems minimally irrational and unscientific to not just be pushing back the goalposts for reopening, but to be totally removing them altogether. One state, Virginia, has already instituted permanent masking and COVID restrictions for businesses, and it seems MIOSHA wants to do the same to the people of Michigan.

Here are the facts: MIOSHA controls regulations for every single business in the State of Michigan per the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1974. The proposed rule set that is currently in question is 2021-27 LE, which specifies, among other things:

1. All businesses across the board (retail, construction, libraries, museums, schools, healthcare offices, and any other place of business with an employer/employee relationship must require patrons and employees to wear face coverings (unless medically unable).
2. All businesses are additionally required to configure business furniture and procedures to allow for either remote work for employees or 6 feet or more of social distancing (with minimal shared desk space and equipment).
3. All businesses are required to have COVID-19 disinfecting procedures in place and maintained.
4. All businesses are required to post signs pertaining to COVID-19 facial coverings, etc.

Regulations become more or less strict depending on industry, but the overall theme is the same. The future will be a repeat of 2020, indefinitely.

For those in freedom loving communities across Michigan, this is not the future we want for ourselves, our businesses, or our children. If these regulations become permanent it will be incredibly difficult to

ever remove them. Like nearly all government regulations, once codified, they are likely to stay on the books forever. For most businesses, this is not just about the inconvenience of wearing a mask, it is about additional equipment and office supplies, inefficient work practices, additional expenses for PPE, additional legal fees, and so much more.

Before these regulations can be implemented, MIOSHA must take comments from the public. They have chosen May 26<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 5pm to hold a virtual public hearing. It is no accident that this is being held on a Wednesday, in the middle of working hours for most average Americans. Even so, we will be there! If there was ever a time to stand up and be counted, now is it. Please contact your representatives, and MIOSHA directly regarding this issue (Toscha Klopp – klopppt@michigan.gov). And join others in person for a rally/protest in Lansing on May 26<sup>th</sup> at 9am to make your voice heard and bring attention publicly to this issue.

It is our conviction that many individuals and businesses will choose to leave this beautiful state if these restrictions are permanently codified. This would be an incredible blow to our already suffering economy and social structure. But it can be stopped, and we intend to do just that.

Meet us at: 530 W. Allegan Street, Lansing MI 48909 (May 26<sup>th</sup> at 9am)

I will see you there!

- Sarah Robinson

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