



May 10, 2023

Re: Universal masking and other covid protections

Dear Health System Leaders:

We would like to preface what follows with an expression of deep admiration and gratitude for the heroic efforts that you, and especially so many thousands of your frontline staff, have engaged in throughout this devastating pandemic. In the face of extraordinary challenges, your tireless commitment to ensuring that the people of the Commonwealth, including especially our most vulnerable residents, have been able to receive the care they have needed has been deeply inspiring. We have also been deeply inspired by the unquestionably heartfelt commitments so many of you have made to learning from the pandemic, to refusing to return to “business as usual”, and to addressing the historic inequities in care that made the pandemic so devastating to the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable residents.

We are nonetheless deeply concerned that, with the ending of the public health emergency, the approaches being taken to lifting covid precautions are incompatible with a serious commitment to new and better ways of working.

Attached, and online here, is an open letter on behalf of [Dignity Alliance Massachusetts](#), a statewide alliance of advocates for older adults, people with disability, and their caregivers. We appeal to you to suspend the ending of universal masking and other covid protections until you have engaged concerned patients and communities in ensuring that they can have justifiable confidence that it is safe for them to visit your facilities. We are deeply concerned by the growing number of our members and constituents who have, with increasing intensity, expressed to us their sense that you are not adequately concerned about their safety. Many of them who have serious medical needs have told us that they will not seek care that they know they should have because of worries that it would be too dangerous. Whether or not you believe their concerns about their safety are warranted, their concerns are very real, and we hope you will take active steps to engage with them in ways that ensure that they can and will have justifiable confidence in the trustworthiness of health care facilities and their leaders and staff.

Despite the seriousness of the increasing distrust our members and constituents have been expressing, we are convinced that it is not too late to reach out to concerned patients and communities in ways that can get us all back on a path of deepening and well-deserved/earned trust. But we worry that if active corrective steps are not taken quickly, serious lasting damage will have been done that cannot easily be repaired.

We are eager to be helpful to you in any ways we can, so please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you think we can be useful.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Lanzikos
Co-founder, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts
Former Secretary of Elder Affairs
35 High Street
Beverly, MA 01915-2103
paul.lanzikos@gmail.com
978-210-1331

Signed on behalf of the following:

Bill Henning
Co-founder, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts
Executive Director, Boston Center for Independent Living
bhenning@bostoncil.org

Arlene Germain
Co-founder, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts and Massachusetts Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
agermain@manhr.org

Richard Moore
Co-founder, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts
Former President Pro Tempore, Massachusetts Senate
Rmoore8743@charter.net

Lachlan Forrow, MD
Coordinating Committee Member, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts
Senior Fellow, Harvard Medical School Center for Bioethics
lforrow@bidmc.harvard.edu

Noel Sanders
Member, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts
Community Member, Boston Center for Independent Living
nsanders@bostoncil.org

Colin Killick
Member, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts
Executive Director, Disability Policy Consortium
ckillick@dpcma.org