

# Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce

*"The Nation's Summer Capital"*

P.O. Box 216

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July 6, 2020

City of Rehoboth Beach Mayor, Commissioners and City Manager  
City of Rehoboth Beach  
229 Rehoboth Avenue  
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971

Dear Mayor, Commissioners and City Manager,

On behalf of Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, I write to you to today to raise our concerns regarding the mandate to wear masks on the public beaches. The Board fully understands and appreciates that the Mayor's and Rehoboth Beach Commissioners' primary goals are to keep our residents and visitors safe and to act in support of Governor Carney's phased reopening plan. The Board further understands that the Mayor and Commissioners are in the difficult position of simultaneously representing the City of Rehoboth Beach, its residents, visitors, and the business community. While the Mayor and Commissioners have couched their mandate that all beachgoers wear masks as a science based approach to slow the spread of Covid-19, the Board is unanimous in its belief that the move is, in fact, a veiled tactic to purposely reduce the number of visitors to our town. We believe that the Mayor and Commissioners continue to feel that, by reducing the numbers of people in our community, they will reduce infections. While that theory may have some efficacy (though the Board is unaware of any studies that suggest that beachgoers are specifically at heightened risk), it does not appear that the Mayor and Commissioners have placed much thought on the cost such an approach has on the viability of the business community and ultimately the viability of the community in general (as a vibrant business community contributes directly to the higher standard of living and property values of the overall community).

Decisions such as this, which have been made quickly and without adequate input from all stakeholders in the Rehoboth Beach community, are damaging to the local economy and the overall health of our businesses. Hardest hit are the hotels across our city. The beach mask requirement has resulted in significant losses in revenues, as many overnight visitors have cancelled their reservations after learning that masks are required for all beachgoers. Hoteliers, restaurateurs and retailers must helplessly endure the loss in customer counts as our visitors now choose to stay in neighboring towns like Bethany, Fenwick and Ocean City, MD. Some of these visitors, having tried something new, will decide to go to those towns in the future, resulting in a loss of future business to the town.

**Mission:** "To promote business, tourism and civic responsibility."

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The Board in no way aims to diminish the extreme importance of wearing masks inside of buildings and in public spaces where social distancing cannot be consistently upheld, but notes that the surrounding communities have not taken the extreme step of requiring masks on the beach. As an alternative, the Rehoboth Beach/Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce offered the Mayor and Commissioners a less economically-damaging crowd control solution back in April – an emergency-related beach tag program. While it may be a bit late to administer now, a beach tag system – temporary or otherwise – could allow for better chances of social distancing on the beach, eliminating the need to require masks. Further, the Board is aware that adequate resources are not available to enforce the beach mask requirement and notes that enforcement of a beach tag system would likely be easier and far more effective. Additionally, we anticipate that local residents and visitors might be more willing to follow social distancing guidelines as a result of a beach tag program than to comply with a contentious mask requirement. The Chamber Board stands willing to re-visit the pilot of a beach tag program, and encourages the Mayor and Commissioners to engage us in the conversation.

The Board appreciates your attention to this matter and remains steadfast that the Mayor and Commissioners gather immediately to rescind to the mandate of wearing masks on Rehoboth Beach and to work with the Chamber Board and other City stakeholders to find a more economically-stable alternative that addresses the health and safety of our residents and guests.

Sincerely,



Carol Everhart  
President/CEO