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State and Territorial Health Officials to the American Public: COVID-19 is Not Over

ARLINGTON, VA— Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) president and secretary of health at the Arkansas Department of Health, and Michael Fraser, chief executive officer of ASTHO, issued the following statement today on the use of face coverings and other public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is not over. COVID-19 remains a threat to many Americans, particularly those with underlying chronic conditions and those who live or work in settings where it is difficult to practice physical distancing.

While state and territorial health officials want to see an end to this virus as much as the residents of their jurisdictions, the fact is the virus is still with us. Infections are increasing in many states across the country, hurting our most vulnerable citizens and threatening the health of our most essential workers, and potentially furthering the loss of lives and livelihoods of tens of thousands of Americans.

We urge all Americans to continue to wear a face covering, to practice physical distancing, and to help protect each other by following additional guidance issued by state, territorial, federal, and local authorities to prevent COVID-19 transmission.

Wearing a face covering is a simple action that helps prevent transmission and protects others. We are all protected from the virus by wearing face coverings. When combined with physical distancing and hand washing, face coverings provide protection against COVID-19.

The public health message is clear: do the right thing and wear a face covering until public health leaders no longer recommend them. It is not only about you: it is about all of us.

Rates of COVID-19 are on the rise again and its more important than ever to wear a mask. The sooner we all take simple steps to protect each other, the sooner we can move on from this pandemic. Absent a vaccine, there is no other way we will slow the spread. The alarming increase in COVID-19 cases in many states is a clarion call to redouble our efforts to prevent transmission of COVID-19, not ignore them.”

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