

MEDIA RELEASE

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New “Keep Maine Open” campaign encourages mask wearing to curb COVID-19

As people await vaccination, business and community leaders urge Mainers to keep the state safe and open

PORTLAND--A broad group of Maine business leaders, health professionals and public safety officials are urging people to keep wearing masks as they await vaccination against the novel coronavirus. The [“Keep Maine Safe, Keep Maine Open” campaign](#) features short videos of people across Maine sharing their stories on social media about why they wear masks. The effort, led by the Maine Public Health Association and U.S. PIRG, launched this week as the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in Maine ticked upward after many weeks of decline.

“Although there’s certainly reason for optimism as more and more Mainers get vaccinated against this deadly virus, lives and livelihoods are still at risk. It’s critical that folks keep wearing masks until a much broader swath of the public gets the vaccines, especially with the highly contagious B117 variant of the virus circulating in our state,” said Matt Wellington, U.S. PIRG’s Public Health Campaigns Director.

In his own video, Scott Smith, operations manager at the Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce, says he’s still wearing his mask because “it offers protection and comfort for himself and those around me.” He urges others to wear masks so that people can feel “safe and respected when they visit our city.”

Pete Erskine, owner of Mexicali Blues, said wearing a mask is “something really small we can all do together to keep us safe during this difficult time.” And Robin Mullens, Executive Director of the Sebago Lakes Chamber of Commerce said they’ve been working hard with their towns to ensure people are wearing their masks and social distancing. She ends her video asking people to “please keep Maine safe, please keep Maine open, and wear a mask.”

[Nearly 15 percent](#) of people in Maine have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. That’s heartening, but health experts say that number should get to around 75 percent in order to reach herd immunity and neutralize the virus’ spread.

“We launched this campaign to remind people that we’re not out of the woods yet – we still need to keep wearing our masks in public to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We also launched it to remind folks of the connection between public health and the economy. Businesses that have outbreaks have to close, which means staff lose money. Keeping Maine open means continuing to follow public health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” said Rebecca J. Boulos, MPH, PhD, Executive Director of the Maine Public Health Association.

People can visit keepmaineopen.com to view all of the videos and share their own story.

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