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## **Gov. Wolf Visits WellSpan York Hospital, Thanks Staff, Discusses Mask-wearing Benefits**

**Harrisburg, PA** – With a recent rise in COVID cases and subsequent additional targeted mitigation efforts put in place, Governor Tom Wolf today visited WellSpan York Hospital to thank staff and emphasize why mask-wearing and social distancing are necessary and effective to fight the spread of COVID-19.

“The best way to prevent our loved ones and ourselves from suffering from COVID-19 is to take preventive measures to stop the spread,” Gov. Wolf said. “That’s why Dr. Levine and I made the decision to require Pennsylvanians to wear a mask in public and it’s why more and more national companies are requiring you to wear a mask when you enter their businesses. They want their employees to stay safe, and they want you to stay safe.”

On July 15, the governor and Sec. of Health Dr. Rachel Levine [signed additional targeted statewide mitigation](#) orders for bars and restaurants, gatherings and telework. These were announced after Allegheny and other counties began to see spikes in cases similar to those at the beginning of the pandemic.

The governor was joined at today’s event by WellSpan president and CEO Roxanna Gapstur; Department of Health Sec. Dr. Rachel Levine; York City Bureau of Health medical director and WellSpan physician, Dr. Matthew Howie; associate professor of biology, Kinsley School of Engineering, Science, and Technology, York College of Pennsylvania, Meda Higa, Ph.D.; and WellSpan cardiac ICU nurse, Christina Hansen.

“Our 20,000 team members are the heart of WellSpan. They are truly our healthcare heroes, and our commitment to them is as strong as their dedication to our patients and communities,” said Roxanna Gapstur, Ph.D., R.N., president and CEO of WellSpan Health. “Throughout this pandemic, our dedicated team members have placed patients first – providing safe, expert and compassionate care to our friends and neighbors. And, as we’ve resumed services at our 200 locations across our six-county region, WellSpan care teams continue to deliver on our promise of providing the safest, highest quality care to our community.”

"Through COVID-19 case investigations, we know much of this is attributed to spread at locations where wearing a mask is difficult and social distancing may not occur – like bars, restaurants and nightclubs," Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. "When conducting case investigations, public health professionals gather that list of close contacts, work to contact trace and inform those individuals of their potential exposure. As you can see contact tracing has, and always will be, a critical part and key strategy to the governor's process of reopening Pennsylvania and an important tool to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19."

"As an evolving epidemic in Pennsylvania, COVID-19 continues to demand ongoing monitoring, assessment and adjustment in our response as a commonwealth," said Dr. Matthew Howie, medical director of the York City Bureau of Health and WellSpan physician. "While frustrating, refinements of our approach to COVID-19, including masking, limitations in gatherings are critical to our success in limiting the spread of the novel Coronavirus in our community. Similarly, redoubling our public health efforts in case investigation and contact tracing is more important than ever. This virus is not forgiving of missteps and does not allow for time to play catch-up."

"Many times, the data supports our predictions in how we believe this virus works. Sometimes, though, we get new data that causes us to change our hypothesis and subsequently the advice we offer for how to prevent spread," Dr. Meda Higa said. "This was the case with asymptomatic spread and mask usage. The scientific process matters, and we shouldn't be afraid when new data causes us to change course. That is the way science works! Scientists also have the same goal as everyone else: To fight back this virus, so that we have the best chance to keep ourselves and our loved ones healthy and alive."

"I've been inspired by the amazing success stories I've seen in the COVID-19 care of our patients," explained Christina Hansen, Cardiac ICU nurse at WellSpan York Hospital. "But COVID-19 has also inspired me to spread the word about the dangers of the disease, from what I've seen in the ICU and the ways this virus attacks the body. Please, it is critical that you wear your mask."

The governor's targeted mitigation order can be found [here](#).

The secretary's targeted mitigation order can be found [here](#).

The secretary's order on mask-wearing can be found [here](#).

FAQs on mask-wearing can be found [here](#).

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