



## Board of Commissioners

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### Statement of Lincoln County Board of Commissioners and County Management Team June 24, 2020

On June 17, 2020 a public health face covering Directive was issued by Lincoln County Health and Human Services with the support of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners as an additional tool in the fight to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Lincoln County.

The Directive broadly identified the use of face coverings in public indoor settings and outdoor locations where social distancing could not be maintained. It was created after examination of policies and guidance from health experts and jurisdictions across Oregon and the nation which have adopted similar recommendations or orders.

In this Directive there were several exceptions identified recognizing that not everyone could or should wear a face covering:

- Persons with health/medical conditions that preclude or are exacerbated by wearing a face covering.
- Children under the age of 12. Children over the age of 2 but under the age of 12 are encouraged to wear face coverings but not required to do so.
- Persons with disabilities that prevents them from using the face covering as described in this Directive. These persons must be reasonably accommodated to allow them access to goods and services.
- People of color who have heightened concerns about racial profiling and harassment due to wearing face coverings in public.

We included the last protection for those within our communities of color who historically, and often personally, found themselves the victims of harassment and violence. After last month's protests, the national attention given to issues of racism, police tactics and inequity, we felt this last exception would be embraced and understood as a small effort to start addressing the realities some of our neighbors deal with on a daily basis.

We are shocked and appalled at the volume of horrifically racist commentary we have received regarding this policy exception. The vitriol that county leadership, staff, and community partners, have been subjected to is unprecedented. All this only a month after George Floyd's death.

The expressions of racism regarding the exception has created a ripple of fear throughout our communities of color. The very policy meant to protect them, is now making them a target for further discrimination and harassment.

Let us be very clear. The Directive and policy were meant to protect. Threats and racist statements turned it into a policy that now harms.

While shocking, it did not surprise us to receive racist calls from elsewhere in the country...because that is where we tell ourselves the world's problems are right? Well that is not completely true. We were surprised by the number of derogatory calls and emails received from our very own coastal communities. We would encourage you to think less about the possibility of your rights being violated and think instead of the heightened feelings of risk that people of color in your neighborhoods daily endure.

The County also received several calls from leadership from our communities of color asking us to revise the policy – it was not providing them protection, but instead making them possible targets for more hate. To address those concerns, we are revising our Public Health Directive and face covering policies. It saddens us greatly that we need to do that. We will not continue a Directive and policies that were intended to assist but instead are a potential source of harm for those we are sworn to protect.

Lincoln County will continue to recognize and fight racism. We will start with changes under our control. We are working on a plan for those changes and details will be provided in the days and weeks ahead. Change starts at home –with each one of us.

We are still in the middle of a pandemic. We are all frustrated with the lack of certainty and control over our lives. While we would like to be done with this virus, it is not done with us. Wear your face covering, be kind to each other. End racism now.



Chair



Commissioner



Commissioner

The Lincoln County Management Team



Curtis Landers  
Sheriff



Rebecca Austen  
Health and Human Services  
Director



Wayne Belmont  
County Counsel

Cynda Bruce, Transit Director  
Tony Campa, Community Justice  
Michael Hereford, Personnel Director  
Dana Jenkins, County Clerk  
Rebecca McBee-Wilson  
Christina Shearer, Finance Director  
Jayne Welch, Tax/Treasurer

Jonathan Cable, District Attorney  
Joe Davidson, Assessor  
Onno Husing, Planning Director  
Roy Kinion, Public Works Director  
Todd Richmond, IT Director  
John Waffenschmidt, Surveyor