

**ALEXANDRIA CITY COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2020**

**PREPARED STATEMENT
OF
BRIAN J. LEE
ALEXANDRIA CITIZEN**

I would like to speak in opposition to the proposed ordinance.

I would like to make three simple points, which support my view that it makes no sense to mandate stricter preventative protocols at this point in Northern Virginia. Most importantly, a mask mandate is not “cost free.” It exacts a huge mental, emotional, and social cost on the citizens of Alexandria. This results in suicides, substance abuse, and overdose deaths that *will* also produce a drastic negative financial and human cost on our community. Furthermore, Alexandria has passed the peak of coronavirus and is at extremely low risk to a new surge. Finally, masks have not been shown to be effective in changing community infection trajectories..

It makes no sense to implement stronger preventive measures at this point, when Northern Virginia has clearly passed the peak of coronavirus infections. The cost is too high, and no benefits have been demonstrated.

1. Cost — There is a massive human health and well-being cost to wearing face coverings that has not been considered by the City Council.

- a. Line 40 of the Coversheet of the proposed ordinance states the “Estimated Cost of Implementation” of this ordinance is “none.” This may reflect a zero direct financial cost to the city budget, but it does not reflect a massive cost in human well-being, in addition to the financial impact of suicide, substance abuse, and overdose deaths.
- b. The CDC “Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report” for August 14, 2020 (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6932a1-H.pdf>) highlighted the tremendous impact of COVID-19 on mental and behavioral health.
 - i. One “lowlight” of this report: 25.5% of Americans age 18-24 seriously considered suicide in the previous 30 days, 16% of those aged 25-44.
 - ii. Those numbers are drastically higher than previous survey reports, which considered a much greater time span for suicidal thoughts (previous year vs. previous month).
- c. Masks result in isolation, fear, lack of human contact, anxiety, and sense of panic that is driving a surge in deaths and injuries of despair: suicide, overdoses, and substance abuse.
- d. The social and emotional impact has fallen disproportionately on children and younger Americans.

2. Timing — Why now? The peak has passed, and Northern Virginia is not at risk of a surge in cases, hospitalizations, or deaths.

- a. The proposed ordinance expires at the time the Declaration of Local Emergency expires (page 5, line 22). The Local Declaration is currently set to expire on September 30 (page 1, line 24) — unless amended — and the Ordinance goes into effect on October 1, *after the expiration* of the Declaration.
 - i. If the Ordinance is adopted tonight, wouldn't it immediately expire, given the current lack of a Declaration of Local Emergency on October 1?
 - ii. This Ordinance therefore is drafted *presuming* the extension of the Declaration of Local Emergency.
 - iii. Shouldn't the City Council weigh — in the light of current evidence — an extension of the Local Declaration *before* considering the expansion of its mandates under the authority of that Declaration?
- b. Regarding that evidence, why *increase* preventive measures when the worst of the pandemic has already passed through our region?
- c. VDH data show that the summer surge had virtually no impact on Northern Virginia, which remains well below pandemic levels
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus/covid-19-in-virginia-cases/>
 - i. Figures 1 – 3 show Virginia Department of Health statistics for Cases, Deaths, and Hospitalizations. *Note that I have “stretched” each chart so they display roughly equivalent scale on the vertical axis.* Each Figure compares three charts:
 1. Statewide, showing “summer surge”
 2. Statewide, excluding Northern Virginia, showing “summer surge”
 3. Northern Virginia Only, showing “no summer surge”
 - ii. The figures show that while there was a statewide surge in cases, deaths, and hospitalizations during the late summer of 2020 (July – August), this surge DID NOT include Northern Virginia. The statewide surge was driven *entirely* by the rest of the state, *not Northern Virginia*.
 - iii. Why not? Northern Virginia accounted for the majority of Virginia's cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in the spring. The novel coronavirus followed a standard infection curve for epidemics, which provided a level of community exposure that clearly limited our susceptibility to the summer surge.

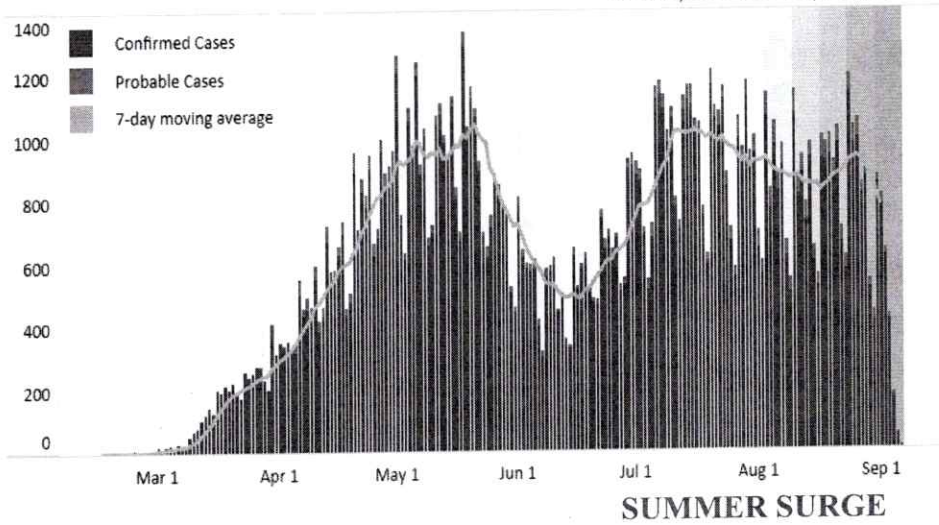
3. Evidence — There is little to no evidence in supporting the case that mask mandates stem the spread in communities, and much evidence that there is zero correlation of effectiveness.

- a. This is why the WHO *does not* recommend mask mandates. Neither did CDC prior to 2019.
- b. I am not speaking of laboratory studies, but real-world evidence of mask mandates and their impact on coronavirus spread in local communities, which is lacking.
 - i. Masks have either been mandated after peak, resulting in no change of trajectory (Italy), or before peak, not preventing increased spread as claimed.
 - ii. See Figure 4 for a selection of charts showing no correlation between mask mandates and reduction in community infection. Examples could easily be multiplied.

**FIGURE 1:
COMPARISON OF CASES IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA AND REST OF STATE**

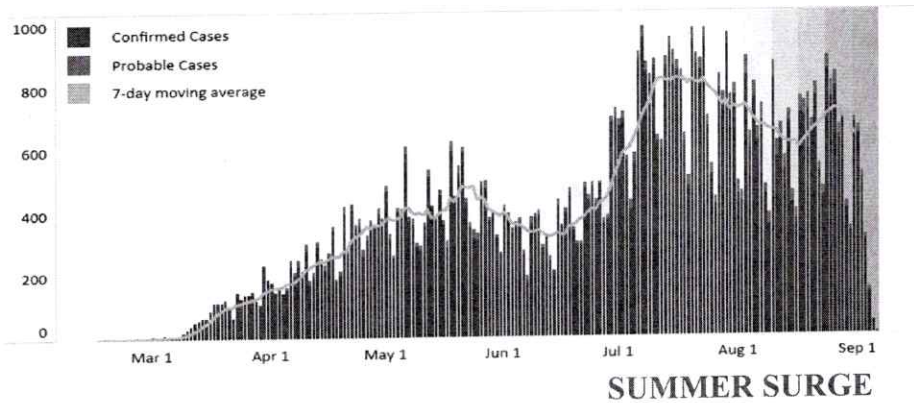
ALL VIRGINIA CASES (VDH, 9/7/20)

800
Cases



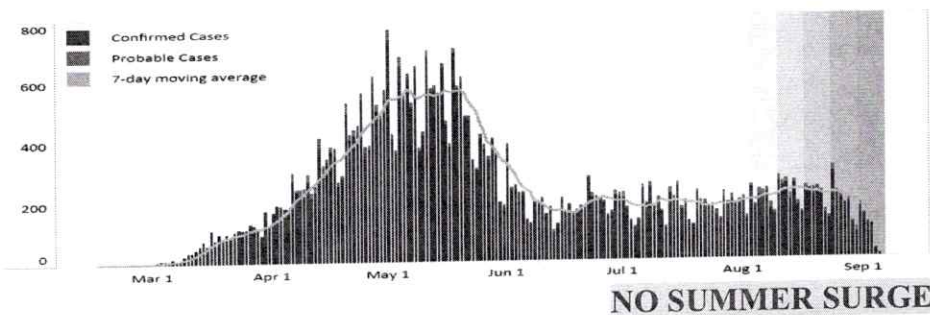
VIRGINIA EXCLUDING NORTHERN REGION CASES (VDH, 9/7/20)

800
Cases



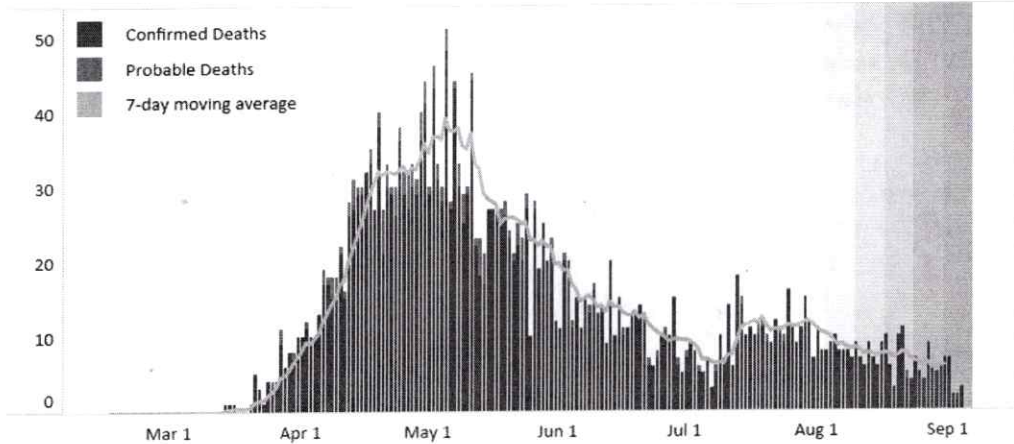
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CASES (VDH, 9/7/20)

800
Cases



**FIGURE 2:
COMPARISON OF CASES IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA AND REST OF STATE**

ALL VIRGINIA DEATHS (VDH, 9/7/20)

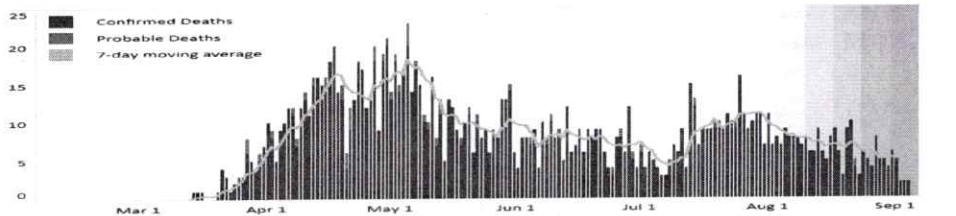


SUMMER SURGE (SMALL)

20
Deaths



VIRGINIA EXCLUDING NORTHERN REGION DEATHS (VDH, 9/7/20)

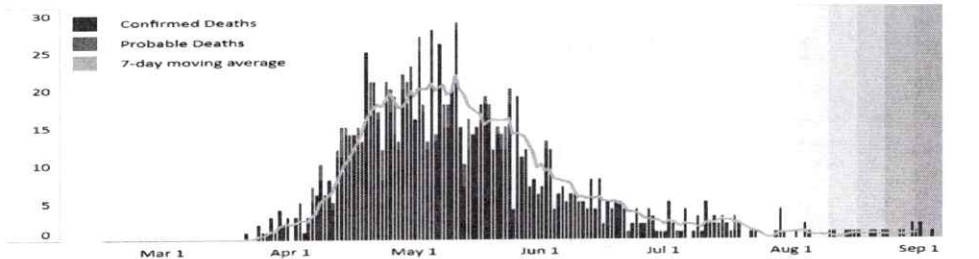


SUMMER SURGE (SMALL)

20
Deaths



NORTHERN VIRGINIA DEATHS (VDH, 9/7/20)



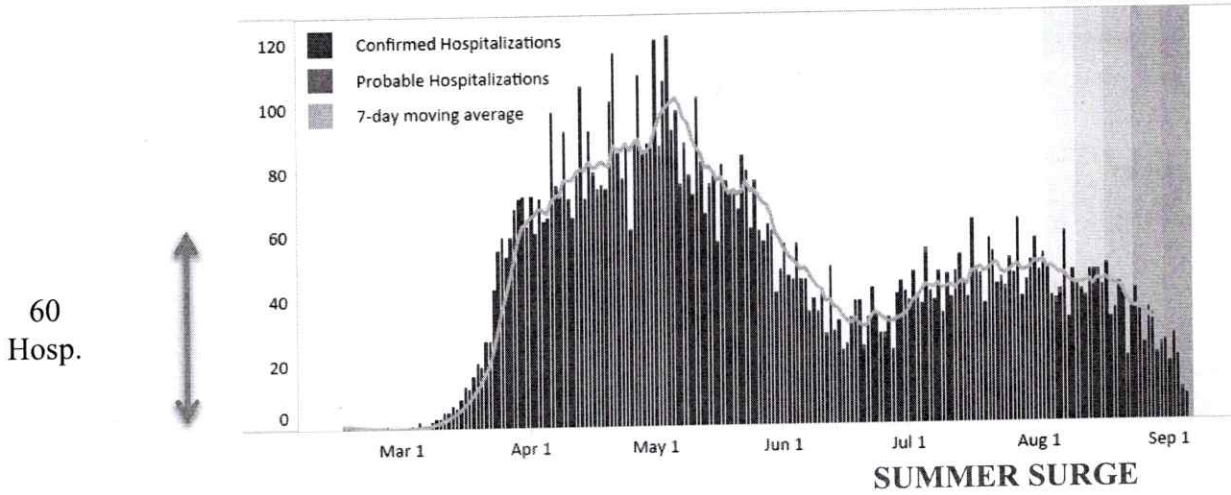
NO SUMMER SURGE

20
Deaths

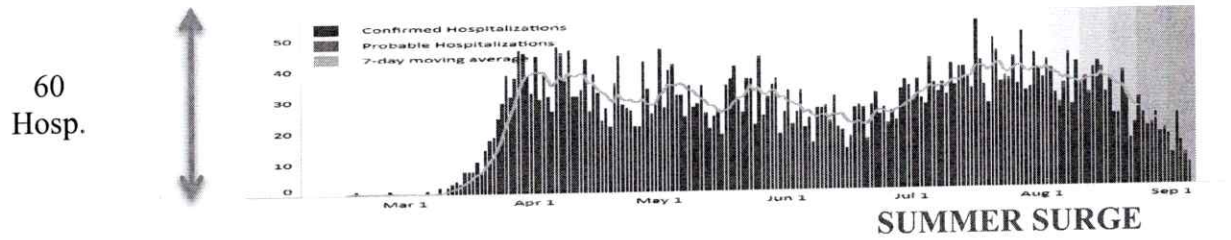


FIGURE 3: HOSPITALIZATIONS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA VS. REST OF STATE

ALL VIRGINIA HOSPITALIZATIONS (VDH, 9/7/20)



VIRGINIA EXCLUDING NORTHERN REGION HOSPITALIZATIONS (VDH, 9/7/20)



NORTHERN VIRGINIA HOSPITALIZATIONS (VDH, 9/7/20)

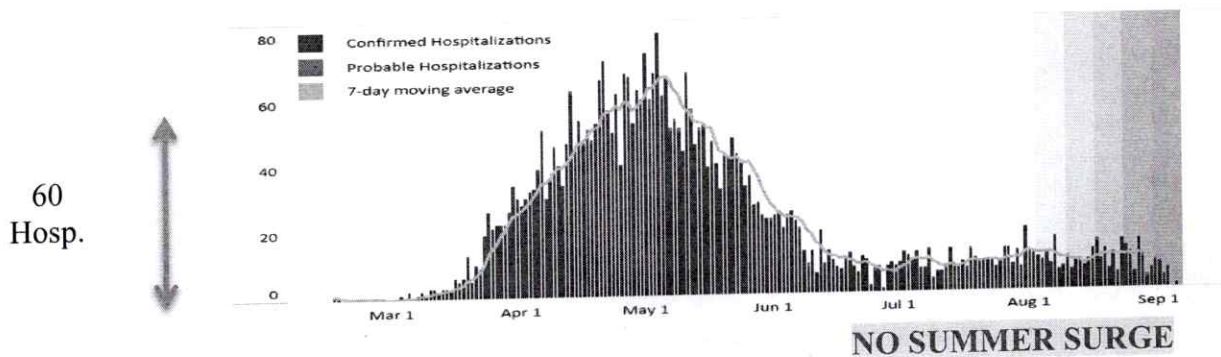
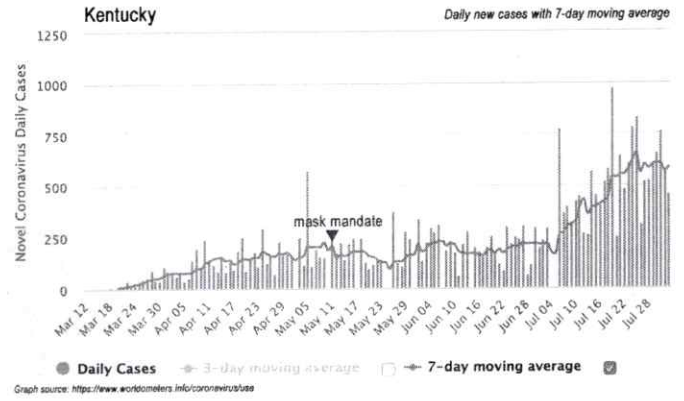
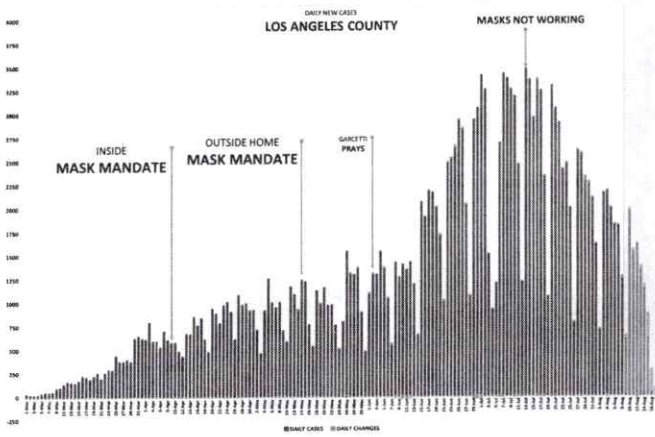
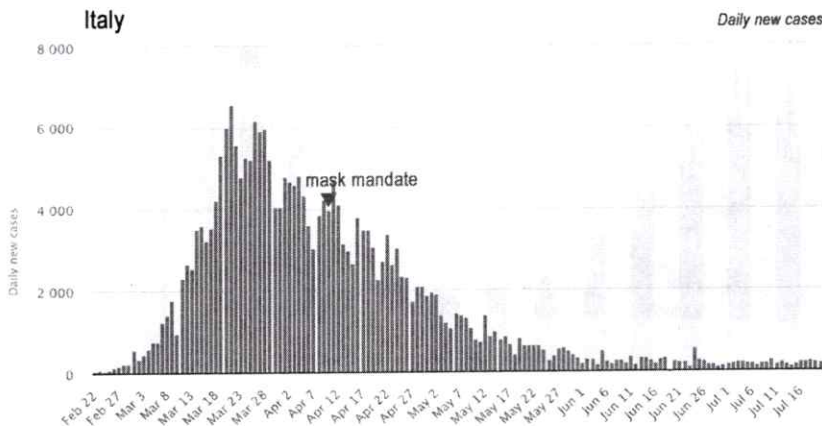
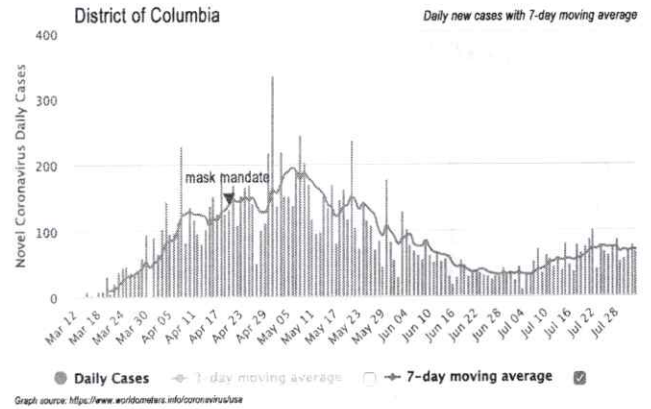
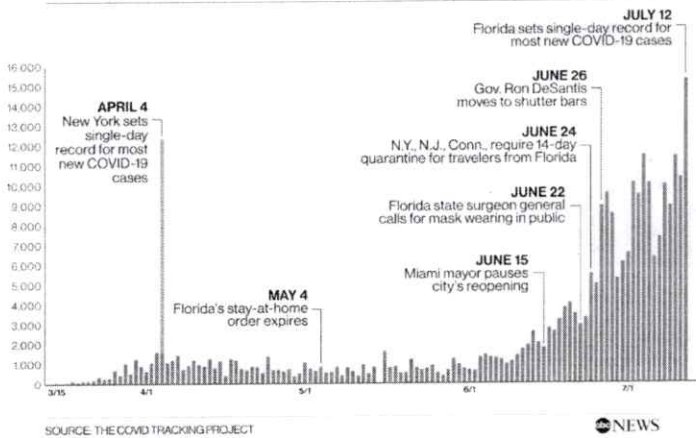


FIGURE 4: MASK MANDATES AND CASE SPREAD, SELECTED CHARTS



Daily New Coronavirus Cases In Florida



37
9-8-20

Gloria Sitton

From: Ayne Furman <l_foot_r@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 07, 2020 8:02 PM
To: City Council
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Pro required masks

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

It is a regular occurrence that folks walk/run on the narrow sidewalks of the SE Quadrant of Old Town without face masks. Frequently, these folks will not attempt to social distance when we get close to each other. This requires me, and sometimes with my dog to step out into the street with oncoming traffic. YIKES!! What other options do I have to avoid my rude, inconsiderate and **un-masked** fellow Alexandrians? Please require face masks, and make the ordinance simple. "Face masks are required outdoors in ALL public spaces". Even runner** and bike riders.

** Runners tend to be the worst offenders, not wearing a face coverings, they do not want to move off the sidewalks to allow social distancing and I have even had them exhale on me.

Let's work as a true community and do what is safest for our neighbors, not what is easiest and most comfortable for the few.

Ayne Furman, DPM
Cell: 703-628-6662

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