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**LOS ANGELES BUSINESS LEADERS SEEK COMPLIANCE-FRIENDLY
'MASK ADVISORY' COMPROMISE AS MASK MANDATE LOOMS**

LOS ANGELES, Calif. (July 21, 2022) – A cadre of diverse business leaders representing all sectors and communities across Los Angeles County urged public health officials to consider a more effective and compliance-friendly alternatives to a universal indoor mask mandate.

Diverse business organizations and trade groups making up the Los Angeles County Business Federation “BizFed,” a network that unites more than 225 business organizations representing 410,000 employers with 5 million employees countywide, called for a “Mask Advisory” order entailing public education campaigns and stepped-up signage in public spaces that encourage voluntary masking.

“This is not a debate about choosing between lives and livelihoods. This is a discussion about educating and empowering Angelenos to make smart choices about protecting their health, our workers and the region’s collective ability to weather this latest wave of infections. We can do better than a heavy-handed mandate at this stage of pandemic recovery and endemic recalibration,” said Tracy Hernandez, Founding CEO of BizFed.

Even the most well-intentioned policies crumble if they cannot be consistently enforced and the public has little will to comply, as evidenced by lax compliance with earlier orders and swiftly rescinded mandates in other jurisdictions. Business patrons unaware of rising case counts and the proven efficacy of face coverings may be reluctant – if at all willing – to comply with mask mandates, placing employees at risk of needless altercations.

“We hope county health officials will reconsider the mask mandate set to take effect July 29 or, at the very least, refrain from asking businesses to act as compliance officers and find another way to implement the rule,” said Brissa Sotelo-Vargas, Chair of the BizFed Board of Directors.

No other California county has publicized plans to reinstate masking orders. LA is the only county tying COVID-19 protocol to its status on the community virus-transmission scale created by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 40 other counties are in the same "high" level, but none have signaled any intent to renew masking orders.

BizFed and its members support the voluntary use of face masks, COVID-19 vaccines and testing to slow the transmission of the virus and protect vulnerable populations. Efforts to provide free access to testing, vaccines and masks have been effective and should be continued to combat the summer wave driven by the spread of Omicron subvariants including BA.5, Hernandez said.

However, forcing businesses to carry the burden of an unenforceable mandate will only stymie economic recovery, confuse covid-weary residents and further erode public trust in governing bodies. A return to universal indoor masking is at odds with the state's endemic roadmap. It also threatens to place local businesses at a competitive disadvantage to businesses in neighboring counties that trust its residents and patrons to make the right decision on their own, guided by two-plus years of lived pandemic experience.

"The economic impacts of the pandemic must be monitored alongside the public health and social impacts. It's possible to protect people, jobs and our sense of community by compromising instead of arm twisting," said Hernandez.

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About Los Angeles County Business Federation "BizFed"

BizFed is a massive grassroots alliance that advocates for policies and projects that strengthen the regional economy. Leveraging power in numbers, BizFed explores all sides of critical issues and takes timely action to spur business growth, job creation, and economic vitality across diverse sectors and communities throughout Southern California. The BizFed family comprises more than **215 diverse business organizations** representing **410,000 employers** with **5 million employees** throughout Los Angeles County.