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City of Racine: City to begin proactive enforcement of Safer Racine face coverings ordinance

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City of Racine – Today, City of Racine Public Health Administrator Dottie-Kay Bowersox announced that the City will begin proactive enforcement of both the "Safer Racine" and mask requirement ordinances. Until now, enforcement has been complaint based, but as COVID-19 numbers surge, in part due to non-compliance, a proactive strategy has become necessary.

"Unfortunately, COVID-19 cases continue to surge locally, in the county, and in the state as a whole. We are seeing numbers equal to or greater than what we saw last April. As we enter the holiday season we run the risk of losing complete control of the virus without significant changes to individual behaviors. Many businesses and individuals in the community are taking this virus incredibly seriously, doing what they need to do in order to stay safe, and we are very appreciative of that. At the same time, there are some in the community who could do better or who are simply refusing to do their part," **said Dottie-Kay Bowersox, Public Health Administrator for the City of Racine.**

Administrator Bowersox continued, "We have found that responding to complaints is too late to prevent the spread of the virus. It takes significant resources to do the necessary contact tracing, for the businesses to do the proper deep cleaning, and for individuals to quarantine when positive or who have had a close contact with someone who is positive. That is why, moving forward, Health

Department staff with the support of the Racine Police Department will begin proactive compliance inspections."

Over the past several weeks the City has seen COVID-19 cases surge, with 635 new confirmed cases in the last 14 days and a 5-day average positive test percentage of 27% as of October 26. The City's case rate, or number of new cases per 100,000 residents over the past 14 days, is nearly 800, far exceeding the previous high of 693 in late May. Racine County overall also continues to see a significant spike in cases, with 1,556 new confirmed cases over the past two weeks. Wisconsin as a whole is now ranked fourth in the nation in terms of new cases over the past week, trailing Texas, Illinois, and California, all of which have populations significantly larger than Wisconsin. Hospitalization rates are growing among COVID-19 positive individuals. Hospitals in southeastern Wisconsin are reporting a 34% increase in COVID-19 positive inpatients and a 25% increase in COVID-19 patients in the ICU between 10/7 and 10/20, the most recent data available. Locally, hospitals have seen a significant increase in COVID-19 positive patients and are enacting policies such as disallowing visitors in order to protect patients and staff.

"I know the pandemic is difficult for all of us and we all want our lives to return to normal. But the COVID-19 virus doesn't care about any of that. It is a virus that will continue to spread, make people sick, and unfortunately kill more of our family and neighbors until we as a City, a county, and really a nation come together to take the necessary, albeit inconvenient, steps to reverse the spread. I ask everyone for your help at this time, but consider this fair warning: we can and will now proactively penalize bad behavior as necessary," **continued Dottie-Kay Bowersox.**

As a reminder, both the Safer Racine ordinance and the City's mask ordinance can be found at www.racinecoronavirus.org. Violations of the Safer Racine ordinance come with a forfeiture of up to $250. If individuals are found to be in violation of the mark ordinance on first conviction the forfeiture is $25, second conviction is $50, and $100 for a third conviction. Upon conviction, the owner or operator of any business, organization, and non-profit entity within the City of Racine found to be in violation of the mask ordinance shall forfeit no less than $50.00 no more than $500.00. Additionally, the city attorney and city clerk are authorized to pursue license revocation for any business licensed by the City of Racine for failing to

comply.