

**Pilon, Janet**

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**Subject:** Mental Health Risks in Youth and Beyond, & The Potential of Mandatory Masks in Hamilton

**From:** Nadia-Eva Mastroianni

**Sent:** Thursday, July 9, 2020 3:34 PM

**To:** [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)

**Subject:** Mental Health Risks in Youth and Beyond, & The Potential of Mandatory Masks in Hamilton

To whom it may concern,

My name is Nadia Mastroianni and I am a national mental health educator living in Hamilton, ON. Over the last few days, a recent conversation has surfaced in regards to the potential step of mandatory mask wearing being issued in our city.

There is one concern that has weighed heavy on me since, and I am inviting a different perspective that perhaps has not yet been considered for our civilians.

As you may be aware, 1/3 people will experience a mental health challenge in their life. From personal experience in my work serving others, the rise of mental health concerns has severely increased over the last few months during COVID-19. Trauma, in-home abuse, anxiety, fear of the unknown, depression due to isolation, and suicide.

You and I know that the mental health system in general, is underfunded, broken and will not be able to handle what is to come with this rise of suffering that has surfaced. It is a hard fact to swallow, to know that youth, adults and elderly have suffered in silence during a government promise that "we are all in this together, Canada strong".

My core belief is that it takes a village to truly come to balance in mind and body, however there is a mess that has been created, and many people, of all ages, have been impacted.

When hearing about the potential of mandatory masks, for a virus that leaves the general public with a 0.00004% chance of dying so far this year, we have a large (and growing) community of people, who've not been acknowledged, that have had their life drastically impacted on a much greater scale.

If wearing a mask becomes mandatory in Hamilton, I invite you to share what our city's plan of action will be for those who are suffering, and for the rising mental health cases that will occur, each day forward upon this potential decision:

- It could be a 30 year old woman who was abused 2 months ago during quarantine. Her husband (abuser) held his hand over her mouth so that no one could hear her scream because their windows were open. She now has undiagnosed post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The thought of wearing a mask has resulted in her turning to alcohol, with a 3 year old daughter at

home, because the sheer memory of something covering her mouth has caused her so much fear, and she has no healthcare tools.

- It could be a 13 year old with frequent anxiety attacks because his eyes have been glued to the TV, watching the news everyday. With no experience on how to respond to such global disarray, everyday he is suffering with 10+ hours of anxiety attacks because his body is experiencing a trauma-induced stress response. A tight chest, shaking, difficulty breathing, a racing heart. He has hid his symptoms for weeks on end because his parents believe he is over-exaggerating. In now hearing the possibility of a mandatory mask, his anxiety attacks have drastically risen because of his fear of not being able to breathe.
- It could be a mom who has a 3 year old son with ADHD, who's behaviour has worsened due to isolation and a change in his routine the last few months. This mom has experienced extreme sadness and loneliness as a single mom, as she raises a boy who's mood and emotions have drastically shifted since being at home full time. Every time she tells him it's time to put on his mask before they walk into the store, he has an emotional reaction that causes outside judgement from others walking by. Due to her son refusing to wear his mask, the store turns her down and she now has to find someone to watch him at home while she buys groceries - just so they have what's needed to make dinner that night.

I could expand on more examples of what could be our reality, however I respect the time that you have taken to consider this issue, as an important focus.

The growing number of individuals in our city struggling with their mental health, along with a system that is certainly not prepared to handle such a change, is the reason why I am addressing this letter to you. I assure you, that this is a community of people who cannot put their trauma, anxiety and depression aside for a mask. I assure you, this is a community of people who has faced enough due to the grief, fear and isolation they have experienced.

I am inviting you to see this perspective, in hopes that it is taken into consideration based on the near future decision of mandatory masks in Hamilton. It is important for me to stand for a community of people sitting with uncertainty in using their voice, and I hope their silent concerns were heard in this email.

Thank you,

Nadia Mastroianni