

UPON APPROVAL OF THE VARIANCE SUBMITTED 12/21/2020 BY NIOBRARA COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER DR. JOLEEN FALKENBURG, THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WILL BE RELEASED BY THE NIOBRARA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Niobrara County Commissioners Official Statement

On December 10, 2020 the Niobrara County Commissioners sent a letter to Governor Mark Gordon expressing their concerns about the state-wide mask mandate instituted by the latest health orders. The letter centered on the restrictions placed on privately owned businesses, and the difficulty of the enforcement of the orders. We also spoke of the difficulty of reaching the testing threshold needed to receive a county variance due to our low population, and that the County's low rate of positive cases currently does not warrant the restrictions of the orders.

On December 21, 2020, at the encouragement of the Commissioners, Niobrara County Health Officer Dr. Joleen Falkenburg officially requested a variance to the current Health Orders from the State Health Department. We are pleased to announce that on December 23, 2020 the variance was granted. The Commissioners are very appreciative of Governor Gordon's and Dr. Harrist's willingness to consider Niobrara County's unique situation, and their efforts to accommodate our citizens concerns.

While the variance relieves Niobrara County from the restrictions of the order, it is important that we become even more respectful of others in our daily lives. There are many in our community that are very vulnerable to the virus, and we need to be especially considerate of their concerns.

We also need to respect the right of any businesses that choose to implement their own mask requirements. If we are defending an owner's right to not be restricted by the mask mandate, then we also need to equally defend the rights of an owner to require a customer to have a face covering to enter their establishment.

Niobrara County Health officer Dr. Joleen Falkenburg and Public Health Nurse Manager Dr. Melanie Pearce, and their respective staffs, have done a tremendous job of dealing with the virus for the people of Niobrara County. We as Commissioners have a great deal of respect for them, and ask that the public be supportive of the difficult decisions that they are sometimes forced to make.

Niobrara County will get through this as we always have, by working together.

Niobrara County Commissioners