

U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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December 5, 2020

Dear Fellow Marylander:

Like so many of you, I am feeling incredibly frustrated these days. I know many of you also feel as if you are at your wits end on what to do to protect you and your family as the pandemic rages across the country.

You think you've been doing everything right – wearing a face covering when you go out, washing your hands regularly and avoiding large gatherings of people not in your immediate household – yet it doesn't seem to be enough.

For many of you, [it may feel a bit like fatigue](#). You're tired of having to find a mask every time you need groceries or get a haircut. And you really wish your kids could be back in their classroom with their teachers because virtual learning is not the same as face-to-face.

You are not alone. It may be December, but it certainly feels like Groundhog Day as we see the daily rates and [deaths from COVID-19 inching up](#) and up and up again. However, when the pandemic first escalated in the spring, it did so regionally. Now, rising daily case rates and deaths are happening nationwide, and this is overwhelming hospitals in every region of the country with no end in sight.

We are approaching [300,000 Americans who will have died during this pandemic](#). If you haven't been one of the more than 14 million Americans struck by this virus – 206,000 Marylanders and counting – you probably know someone who has been sick. Maybe it's a relative or a coworker, or a friend of a friend.

As weeks turned into months, what we thought were [safe social pods](#) of people we know are “safe” are shrinking smaller and smaller, as they should. It may seem difficult, but we all need to shift back into high alert and take care of our families and communities a bit longer. The dark winter that we all feared has arrived. And the virus isn’t letting up even though a vaccine may be on the horizon.

This current wave is dangerously different, but we will ride through it if we stick to the basics of [public health guidance](#) that we have all heard before – wear a multi-layer, well-fitting mask; stay at least 6 feet away from someone who doesn’t live with you; and wash your hands. I know we have all heard this message before, but we must ALL take it seriously NOW to protect our family, friends, and neighbors.

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) expanded its guidance to [recommend the use of face coverings indoors and outdoors](#) when a physical distance cannot be maintained. They cite “compelling evidence” that face masks help protect the spread of COVID-19 and that approximately one-half of new infections are transmitted by persons who have no symptoms.

Every one of us is feeling some level of frustration, fatigue, even anger and loneliness. We miss the community bonds and family moments. For many, [food insecurity has grown more dire](#) as work prospects have been frozen due to the pandemic.

As hard as it is, we need to stay vigilant for a while longer. No one can say exactly how long until enough people in this country are vaccinated to create the type of [shared immunity](#) that is needed. We are not there yet.

What has kept me going during some of the toughest days has been seeing neighbors reach out to help neighbors in need. Local governments, while strapped for cash, have done everything within their power to keep up support for [food distributions](#) and [utility assistance](#). Small businesses have pivoted from their everyday products to making [personal protection equipment](#) like masks and gloves. Social media networks have emerged to [connect COVID-19 survivors](#) with others like them who can share symptoms and offer shared hope and encouragement.

Throughout the hardships and [lack of a coordinated federal strategy](#) to help fend off this global pandemic, we learned that we are all in this together. That is as true now as it was at the start of 2020.

It’s a big ask, but I am urging everyone to keep at it. Be patient and stay smart. Even if you do not think you are high risk, don’t put yourself in a position where you might get infected or infect someone else you care about, or even someone you don’t know. As Governor Hogan said recently, [“Wear the damn masks.”](#)

This is not the time to relax or throw away the precautions. We can stay safe and support our neighbors and those in our community who are most vulnerable due to health or economic issues or social isolation.

Thank you for your efforts and perseverance. Stay well.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Ben Cardin

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