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News Release

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Immediate Release

DIDHD Regretfully Rescinds Mask Order

Kingsford and Iron River, MI- September 24, 2021- Dickinson-Iron District Health Department (DIDHD) regretfully rescinds mask order for children in kindergarten through grade 6.

“The decision to issue the mask order was not based on a political platform; the decision was based on current local data and guiding public health principles,” stated Daren Deyaert, Health Officer, “The decision came after exhausting all other options while considering public health’s best interest.” While public health still feels this is the best option, the Department was informed on Wednesday, September 22, 2021 of language in fiscal year 2022 state budget (Senate Bill 82) that jeopardizes future health department funding. The bill has been approved, and Governor Whitmer has indicated she will sign the bill early next week.

According to Senate Bill 82, section 1222 part 4, any health department that has issued an emergency order in attempt to combat COVID-19 will be negatively impacted. The funds appropriated for essential local public health services will be withheld. Essential local public health services include: immunizations, infectious disease control, sexually transmitted disease control and prevention, hearing screening, vision services, food protection, public water supply, private groundwater supply, and on-site sewage management. “We understand without this funding, we will lose important programs along with several staff positions. These programs have been a staple in our community for the last 85 years,” stated Deyaert. “It has been a very difficult decision to be forced to choose between what is best for the public’s current health situation vs the future of our essential public health programs that will hopefully continue to serve our community for years to come.” It is still possible for a mask mandate to exist for school aged children; however, the decision is left to local school districts or by a majority roll call vote by county commissioners from both Dickinson and Iron counties.

Ruth Manier, Community Health Services Director, states “Masks continue to be an important tool to prevent the spread of COVID-19. There are numerous studies that

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indicate that consistent and correct mask use effectively and safely prevents the spread of COVID-19.” Dickinson-Iron District Health Department, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) continue to urge the community to mask up, wash your hands, social distance, and get vaccinated when eligible. “I encourage and ask this community to consider the urgency of this health crisis on our community when deciding whether or not you and your family will exercise prevention measures,” says Manier.

DIDHD has received an overwhelming amount of support, not only in recent weeks, but since the beginning of the pandemic. Staff have been challenged in many ways, but they have remained dedicated to their mission to protect public health. DIDHD has been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic since December of 2019.

DIDHD will continue to prioritize COVID-19 vaccinations, and provide information and recommendations to our community and its stakeholders.

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