



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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**OFFICIAL STATEMENT
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Statement from Kalamazoo County Health Officer on Michigan Supreme Court Ruling

KALAMAZOO, MI. - Today, Kalamazoo County Health Officer Jim Rutherford released the following statement following Michigan's Supreme Court ruling on Friday.

Friday, October 2, 2020, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that Governor Whitmer lacked the authority to issue emergency Executive Orders to fight COVID-19. As Governor Whitmer noted in her statement, many orders protective of public health can continue under other authorities, including authorities of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and local public health departments.

The Michigan Supreme Court ruling on this case presents a very likely change in the near future, but as of now and according to the Governor's Office, **the COVID-19 executive orders remain in effect.** The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department is working closely with MDHHS, our Corporation Counsel, and other local public health departments on this matter. We will provide more guidance as the changes become clear. We ask for your patience as we work to interpret the rulings and establish the best course of action to protect the health of the public.

If necessary, I am considering options for subsequent developments, such as issuing emergency orders for Kalamazoo County. Under The Public Health Code (Public Act 368 of 1978), **health officers have the authority to issue such emergency orders if needed to protect the public's health during an epidemic.** I am prepared to issue such orders.

In the meantime, I cannot stress enough to Kalamazoo County that **all current COVID-19 executive orders remain in effect.** Protecting public health is our top priority. Our best defense against further spread of COVID-19 in our community is the strict adherence to public health guidance: **wear masks, keep 6 feet of social distance, wash or sanitize your hands, stay home if you are ill or have flu-like symptoms, adhere to indoor and outdoor social gatherings and organized events capacity limitations, and get a flu shot this year.** Furthermore, private businesses and **the public sector have the authority, rights, and responsibility to require masks and other policies to assure the safety and health of their staff and clients.** I recommend workplaces continue to follow the [Kalamazoo County Public Health Guidance to Reopen Workforce](#) plan released in May and the practices and policies established under the COVID-19 executive orders.

The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department will continue to provide updated information as it becomes available.

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