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WFIA Statement on Phase 3 Reopening Plans

Mask requirements at discretion of business owners

OLYMPIA — Today’s announcement from Gov. Jay Inslee to lift COVID-19 restrictions by June 30 if enough people get vaccinated is welcome news, according to Tammie Hetrick, president and CEO of the Washington Food Industry Association.

“The WFIA has been advocating for a reopening in the face of continued decreases in COVID cases and increases in vaccinations. We are pleased that Gov. Inslee is following the CDC recommendations and loosening the restrictions on Washington state residents. It is time to reopen our state,” said Hetrick.

Beginning next week, all counties will be in Phase 3 of the Reopening Plan, according to Inslee. Washington will be fully reopened by June 30, with certain requirements. Washington could be fully reopened earlier if 70 percent of people in Washington are either vaccinated or have begun the vaccination process. Inslee said he hopes that “people will see this as an opportunity to move faster.”

If the ICU statewide capacity reaches 90 percent, then the state would need to roll back some of the requirements, the governor said.

Beginning today, it will be up to each business as to whether a mask will be mandatory for employees and customers **if the individual is fully vaccinated**. The state of Washington will no longer have a mask mandate for fully vaccinated individuals who are over the age of 16+. This

does not pertain to hospitals, long-term care facilities, schools, public transportation, correctional facilities or doctor's offices.

"Our grocery stores, convenience stores and suppliers have been leaders since the very beginning of COVID-19, developing safety protocols long before official regulations were put in place," said Hetrick. "As the governor noted, individual grocery stores retain the right to enforce mask mandates, and individuals are still welcome to wear masks if they want to," added Hetrick.

"The best defense against COVID-19 is getting vaccinated. We have consistently said that vaccines are the best, and scientifically proven way to keep people safe from COVID-19. Today's announcement suggests we are on the cusp of finally turning the corner on this pandemic," said Hetrick.

"We hope more Washingtonians will continue to take advantage of the vaccine so that we reach the June 30 reopening goal."

About the Washington Food Industry Association

The Washington Food Industry Association (WFIA) is dedicated to promoting and protecting the independent, community-focused grocery and convenience store industry and its suppliers. Founded in 1899, the WFIA represents the state's independent grocers and convenience stores. Membership includes all levels of the food and beverage distribution industry who collaborate to promote the principles of free enterprise to ensure a vigorous, competitive, economically healthy food industry. The grocery and convenience store industry provides about 50,000 Washington jobs. For more information, visit www.wa-food-ind.org.