



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 10, 2020

Nashville Councilwoman: People Who Don't Wear Masks Should Be Charged With Murder

A Nashville, Tennessee, councilwoman suggested last week that people who refuse to wear masks in public be charged with murder.

During a Wednesday virtual meeting of committees of the Nashville Metro Council, at-large member Sharon Hurt [addressed some remarks](#) to Mike Jameson, Nashville Mayor John Cooper's director of legislative affairs, who was also in attendance.



"I work for an organization, that if they pass a virus, then they are tried for murder, or attempted murder, if they are not told," said Hurt, "and this person who may very well pass this virus that's out in the air because they're not wearing a mask is basically doing the same thing to someone who contracts it and dies from it."

Presumably Hurt was referring to her employment as executive director of Street Works, a Nashville HIV/AIDS nonprofit. But knowingly passing HIV on to another person is considerably different from passing the coronavirus. For one thing, the number of Americans with HIV is [relatively small](#), and the disease is transmitted in very specific ways, primarily homosexual intercourse and intravenous drug use. One can easily avoid both getting and transmitting HIV by refraining from those activities. The coronavirus, by contrast, affects a large swath of the population, many of whom do not even know they have it, and we are still not entirely certain how it is transmitted or what measures will best prevent transmission. Masks, especially when used by amateurs, are almost certainly [ineffective](#) in preventing it.

Nevertheless, Hurt pressed forward with her comments. "It seems to me that we have been more reactive, as opposed to proactive, and a little too late, too little," she continued. "Maybe there needs to be stronger legislation to say that if you do not wear a mask and you subject exposure of this virus to someone else then there will be some stronger penalty as it is in other viruses that are exposed."

In other words, in Hurt's opinion, people who go out in public without masks, which Cooper has mandated, should be charged with murder or attempted murder.

"Hurt's suggestion," noted the [Tennessee Star](#), "comes as the Nashville-Davidson County COVID-19 dashboard indicates a recent decline in new daily cases of COVID-19 and a fatality rate of 0.9 percent." It is likely that the fatality rate is even lower when asymptomatic carriers, who often don't get tested, are included. In May, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated the virus's fatality rate to be just [0.26 percent](#).

Jameson responded to Hurt's suggestion by pointing out that while police have been empowered to cite mask-ordinance violators, "the council does not have the opportunity on its own to create criminal legislation. That is a state creature."

"No, I was afraid that was going to be the answer," replied Hurt, "but I guess that's the whole point of



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asking for something to be done as early as the council was pushing.... It wasn't taken as seriously as it should have been, and thus we are in the situation that we're in right now."

Apparently, Cooper's crackdown on mask violators, which he [announced](#) the same day as the council meeting, wasn't sufficient to address Hurt's concerns. Cooper said that there will now be 30 police officers — up from 19 — patrolling Broadway on Friday and Saturday nights. Twenty-four will be on walking patrol, and the remaining six "will be on ATVs and conduct mobile enforcement, including stopping and citing any 'transpotainment' vehicles operating in violation of the Health Department's prohibition," Cooper explained.

"In other words, the 21st largest city in the U.S. is utilizing over 3% of its police force enforcing mask mandates," a former chief of police editorialized in [Law Enforcement Today](#). "When are the American people going to have enough of this nonsense? Unknown."

"It is ironic," he continued, "that while cities demonize police for being power-hungry thugs who are hell-bent on killing people, they are using those same police officers to harass people over not wearing masks that may or may not even be necessary."

"This is what happens when power goes to people's heads," the former chief declared. "This is not about public health; this is about power."

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