



April 8, 2021

The Honorable Governor Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon
900 Court Street Suite 254
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown:

Oregonians have sacrificed and lost much over the past year as they have fought through the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud of our Clackamas County residents and businesses who have complied with your orders and who take protective measures every day, such as masking up and changing business operations.

It brings us great delight to see children back at school and the hum of school buses traveling down our streets. Thank you for allowing a return to in-person instruction and activities. We know this will help the mental health of our youth. This disease has greatly harmed our children and it is time for us to help them recover and thrive.

Our businesses have been safely operating in Moderate Risk since Feb. 26, while continuing to abide by OHA's guidelines. They have continued to make every effort to work in a way that will help slow the spread of the virus, often at a cost to them. We were frustrated to learn on Tuesday that, by tomorrow, Clackamas County businesses will be mandated to cut back on capacity as we are moved to the High Risk category. Our understanding was that we would receive a two week caution period before having our risk category changed. Three days' notice to our businesses to prepare to cut capacity does not afford them the time necessary to plan for inventory reduction, staffing changes, and every day operation modifications. As an example, many of our restaurants have spent \$10,000 - \$20,000 in purchasing supplies and retraining and hiring employees that will be lost by this sudden change.

We know that reopening schools to in-person instruction, coupled with businesses bringing employees and customers back, results in COVID-19 cases rising. This is not new information and it is not surprising.

However, reopening then closing businesses, and moving kids from hybrid in-person to only virtual learning, would cause harm in addition to rising COVID-19 cases. The economic hardships will be felt by our communities for years.

We believe there is an opportunity to consider other factors when determining community risk level.

For example, in Clackamas County, we have identified many of our positive COVID-19 cases are generally contained to outbreaks connected to school activities outside of in-person instruction, such as small social gatherings. We have also found that very few are related to workplaces. Holding back the entire community and demanding that hundreds of businesses reduce capacity – and place more people back in the unemployment line – is not sustainable and causes additional harm.

We understand that hospital capacity was a factor in your recent decision to move us back to High Risk, but we must point out that our hospital capacity remains stable in the region. We fully understand the need to keep cases low to ensure we have enough hospital capacity, ICU beds and ventilators. Although cases are going up, as expected, we have successfully maintained capacity and been able to provide the needed services for our most severe cases. Hospital capacity cannot be understated. Please consider a region's hospital capacity and outbreak sources before deciding to move a county into a higher risk level. Reducing business capacity due to case counts alone, when other public health metrics should be considered, is another setback to our entire community.

As more and more have access and receive the vaccine every day, we ask that the risk levels determined by the state include other factors. Please consider elements beyond how many cases per 100,000 people. For example, if the cases are contained to outbreaks, an entire community should not be punished. Outbreaks were once a metric for reopening Oregon in the past and can be again.

We are also concerned about the accelerated timeline for vaccine eligibility that does not match available vaccine supplies. We want to continue to uplift the need for vaccine allocations to be redistributed to the most populated areas in the state, including Clackamas County, that are still behind in providing access to community members that have been eligible for weeks and frustrated, especially our local frontline workers and small businesses.

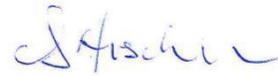
Our residents have been through much – three declared disasters in 11 months. While our communities are resilient, many businesses and their employees are on precipice of collapse. We must also consider the impact to our lower socioeconomic groups. This is about economic justice for people. Please allow us the two week caution period and focus the efforts of education and enforcement on the populations where the spikes are occurring.

Clackamas County is committed to work collaboratively with the State to fight the spread of the virus. We ask you to take our feedback and recommendations to heart.

We work closest with our most affected communities and can provide insight in what is working and what is not. We are available to further discuss these considerations further.



Tootie Smith
Chair



Sonya Fischer
Commissioner



Martha Schrader
Commissioner



Paul Savas
Commissioner



Mark Shull
Commissioner