

DRAFT

April 6, 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 business 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 operating in Moderate Risk since Feb. 26. It is heartwarming to see lights come back on at our main street businesses, employees come back to work, and our communities begin to pick up the pieces. All while still taking action to protect themselves and their communities from COVID-19.

We know that reopening schools to in-person instruction, coupled with businesses bringing employees and customers back, COVID-19 cases risk 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.

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

In Clackamas County, we have identified the sources for many of our positive COVID-19 cases. They are generally contained to outbreaks connected to schools activities outside of in-person instruction, small social gatherings, and very few workplaces. Holding back the entire community and demanding hundreds of businesses to reduce capacity – and place more people back in the unemployment line – is not sustainable and causes additional harm.

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 still have the capacity to provide the needed services for our most severe cases.

With the vaccine here and more and more receiving the vaccine every day, we ask that the risk levels determined by the state include other factors. Please consider the cases beyond how many per 100,000 people. If the cases are contained to outbreaks, an entire community should not be punished. Outbreaks were a metric for reopening Oregon in the past and can be again.

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.

Our residents have been through much – three declared disasters in 11 months. Our community is resilient. Reducing business capacity due to case counts alone, when other public health metrics should be considered, is another blow to our community.

Thank you for considering our feedback. We are available to further discuss these considerations further.

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