

April 27, 2021

Governor Kate Brown  
Office of the Governor  
900 Court Street, Suite 254  
Salem, OR 97301-4047

Dear Governor Brown:

This message is a unique one as it represents the first time county governments have formally written to your office in partnership with Oregon's hospitality industry. We write to you to ask for reconsideration of our approach to virus mitigation measures at this stage in the crisis.

The virus continues to take a grave toll on our local economies with restaurants representing one of the key cornerstones fueling connectivity, hope, and mental health for our residents. These are the places we break bread, share inspiration, and encourage one another and the COVID crisis has stripped us of these life essentials.

The environment in each county throughout Oregon is uniquely its own. And the experts of these regions live and breathe their successes and failures. The job of a Governor in a crisis like this is an unenviable one. We fully accept and understand the importance of hospital capacity including an assessment of available personnel in order to adequately meet the demands of any health emergency.

We have reached the point where the vast majority of Oregon's population most prone to serious illness has been successfully protected from the virus. And we must all admit a documented case today does not carry with it the same weight as a documented case in the Fall when so many of our fellow Oregonians lacked access to vaccine treatment. The variants are indeed troublesome, and we share your concern for their spread. But shutting down our restaurants and further depriving Oregonians of their right to make calculated community engagement risks will not result in success.

The time has come to allow our communities the opportunity to move forward while embracing continued health and safety precautions. Our people understand the risks associated with COVID and our businesses have proven their ability to adhere to the highest expectations in safety, sanitation, and air quality. It is no coincidence Oregon has not seen one instance of a super spreader event tied to our hospitality industry.

We ask for your support in putting all effort and momentum into vaccinations. We have the safety guidelines and expectations clearly outlined for all industry sectors and have reached a point where those safety measures, alongside our work to achieve vaccination goals, can carry us through the other side of this pandemic without breaking our statewide hospital capacity.

You must know restrictions on specific types of businesses compared to others within our local communities is creating rifts and dividing people rather than bringing Oregonians together. We can flip the script by removing state mandated business restrictions on our communities while empowering our county health departments to uphold high expectations for ongoing health and safety measures as recommended by the CDC.

We have reached our turning point and we thank you in advance for your consideration.