



May 1, 2020

The Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 94814

Dear Governor Newsom:

Thank you for your leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognize that the last several weeks have been challenging, frustrating, and somewhat rewarding. We do not take the affect COVID-19 has had on our valley lightly. We applaud the collective efforts of the State and County teams, even when difficult decisions had to be made to ensure the greater good for the health for our residents.

We represent cities located within the Coachella Valley, a sub-region of Riverside County. We know you are familiar with our population, seasonal snowbirds, tourism/hospitality industry, and resilience in trying times. With the seasonal decline of our population leading into the heated summer months, now is the time to collaborate with our year-round residents and business owners to thoughtfully reopen businesses and services, and energize our employment base. We have read through and heard your phased process, however, without specific dates, it does not give our residents or us as leaders, hope for salvaging the great state of California.

Our residents have collectively adhered to the stay at home, cover your face, and maintain your space orders/guidelines over the past several weeks. What initiated as a potential two to three week stay at home order that was fully supported; has now resulted in a "there's no end in sight". This is not only mentally and emotionally intolerable, but also an economic disaster. Our actions have provided positive results in flattening the curve to avoid a surge within our hospitals. The vast majority have also complied with the mandate to wear a mask when outside of the home to perform essential work or obtain essential items and services. That being said, we are ready to move towards economic recovery for our residents in our cities. We have seen the numbers for unemployment rise, and we cannot tolerate a worse recession than we experienced in 2008. Our residents overcame that unfortunate time in our economy, and they will overcome this pandemic as well. Our residents recognize the need to move on and learn to co-exist with COVID-19 in our communities.

We are requesting the State's plan, with dates certain, for the reopening of businesses, services and other facilities no later than May 8, 2020. We are actively working with our local businesses, large and small, to be prepared when the lift in restrictions occurs. We have seen the success of essential businesses like grocery stores, Costco, Home Depot, Lowe's and others to ensure safe distancing, mask wearing and clean work stations/carts/processes. It's time to expand these guidelines, and any additional precautions that may be required or prudent to other businesses, restaurants, and services within our sub-region of the Coachella Valley.

We believe that the health data provided by Riverside County for our respective cities, in addition to our valley's ability to continue to monitor cases, should allow our cities a thoughtful reopening of our economy. Our sub-region of the Coachella Valley is different from West Riverside County. We are asking you to allow our cities, the sub-region of Coachella Valley, to exercise a phased reopening of our businesses, services and restaurants to begin no later than May 15, 2020. We support delaying the reopening of large gatherings, group sports, movie theatres, schools and short-term vacation rentals. However, we would like the ability for our hotels/resorts to accept leisure guests, in limited capacity, by May 22nd – in advance of Memorial Day weekend. There are national guidelines in place for other businesses and services, a science-based approach to track progress, and a desire from many of our residents to get back to work to provide for their families. A healthy community is a prosperous community. We need and want to prosper in our cities.

We continue to learn from this pandemic. We have assisted our healthcare systems to be ready, coordinated with city and county EMS, provided guidance to our local businesses, restructured how to remotely operate our cities, and supported the orders from the County based on the public health data to be part of the solution to decrease COVID-19 deaths in our area. We need to continue this process through our readiness to reopen, recognizing the flexibility needed should scaling back be again required. Our new normal will include our collective ability to co-exist with COVID-19. Some will choose to continue to shelter, others will safely return to work and support our businesses. We support both decisions, but need to activate our economy NOW to avoid an unrecoverable financial demise.

We appreciate your consideration of our request to provide the State's plan to reopen businesses, services, and restaurants in our cities within the Coachella Valley by May 8, 2020. We recognize the need to have local orders, developed in concurrence with local county health officials. We are prepared to collaborate with our respective business entities to ensure adherence to safety guidelines. With the collaborative and collective knowledge and guidance from the cities and county used to keep the public's health and safety maintained, it's time for our residents to decide on their own if they choose to remain sheltered in place or if they decide they want to work, shop and live - for the betterment of our communities and our health. Thank you.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



CHAD MAYES
Assemblyman, 42nd District



LINDA EVANS
Mayor, City of La Quinta



GLENN MILLER
Mayor, City of Indio



TY PEABODY
Mayor, City of Indian Wells



SCOTT MATAS
Mayor, City of Desert Hot Springs



GINA NESTANDE
Mayor, City of Palm Desert

cc: Eduardo Garcia, Assemblyman 56th District
Cameron Kaiser, MD – Riverside County Public Health Officer
V. Manuel Perez, Chairman, Riverside County Board of Supervisors
Scott White, CEO, Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau
Josh Bonner, CEO, Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce
Joe Wallace, CEO, Coachella Valley Economic Partnership
Erin Sasse, Regional Public Affairs Manager, Riverside County, League of California Cities
Gretchen Gutierrez, CEO, Desert Valleys Builders Association