



September 15, 2020

To:
 The Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
 State of California
 1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor,

On behalf of a coalition of local Riverside County Chambers of Commerce & Business Associations, we are writing in an earnest effort to seek redress for our economic hardship created by the current COVID-19 State of Emergency, and further exacerbated by the reopening plan unveiled on August 28th, 2020.

Before we address our hardships, let us first say we appreciate the enormity of the task that has been placed before you. Perhaps no Governor not presiding during a time of armed conflict has faced a more difficult challenge than the one before you. Your challenge of protecting human life from a pandemic, while simultaneously staving off economic collapse, is the great challenge of our time. You have our respect, and our gratitude during this most challenging time in the State's history.

As you know the State of California is a large and diverse region, made up of a great variance of geographic, socioeconomic, and cultural variety. In our region, the Inland Empire, we have many challenges that are unique to us. Many of the booming economic sectors that buoy our coastal regions have not yet benefited our region. Our economy is rooted in working-class labor; it is sectors like agriculture, logistics, personal services, hospitality, and small business entrepreneurs that put food on

the table for our families. We are predominantly a blue-collar community that takes pride in rolling up our sleeves and going to work. Currently, it has been made almost impossible for us to do that, now or in the near future.

While we appreciate the efforts that must have gone into the color-coded system you enacted on August 28th, in many ways the accompanying direction only served to underscore the unique circumstances we face. With temperatures that reach 120 degrees in the Summer, it is impractical to move operations outdoors in the Coachella Valley. That request would put people in danger if it were executed. We don't say that to make light of your efforts, but rather to amplify a fact we hope to drive home in the course of this letter, a one-size fits all approach to a public health crises is not equitably serving the diverse regions you govern.

We implore you to show flexibility.

In an August 12th letter to state public health officials, Riverside County Supervisors sent via County Executive Officer George Johnson a proposed three-phase plan that builds on steps the County has taken to fight the spread of COVID-19. The letter also spells out the strain the virus and the ensuing economic shutdown has put on County residents and public services.

Under the County's reopening plan, starting September 8th, dine-in restaurants, wineries, and breweries; places of worship; non-essential indoor offices; and "personal care businesses" like nail salons and tattoo shops, would have been allowed to reopen in accordance with state COVID-19 guidelines.

Beginning September 22nd, we would allow wedding receptions, group meetings and events to begin.

Starting October 6th, we would reopen gyms, movie theaters, and bars.

Health metrics would be measured to see if it is safe to move forward with each reopening phase. The plan was thoughtful, concise, and applicable to our specific region and circumstances.

We are asking you through this letter for one of two outcomes:

1. You allow the County of Riverside, recognizing the unique needs of our region, to reopen under the Riverside County proposed August 12th framework.

or

2. You allow Riverside County to progress to the equivalent proposed phase(s) of the August 12th plan within the framework of your new plan.

Further, to better assist our local County Health Officials stay on top of future outbreaks, we are asking that you allow antigen testing for rapid results and deployment within the community.

We believe these actions will put our County on a solid road to economic and health recovery.

Our region is much different than the urban clusters found along the coast, as we do not possess the urban density of our neighbors to the West. These types of factors are what must be considered when trying to mitigate pandemic spread and measure the effectiveness of PPE and social distancing, in an effort to control the curb of infection and manage the local medical communities ability to respond to case load.

There are factors that make us unique, as Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Health Officer for Riverside County has pointed out on many occasions. We do have at risk populations within our community that must be protected. We also have neighbors that of their own accord choose to take extra precaution to protect both themselves and their family. The positive news is we now seem to better understand how this virus interacts and spreads, which helps our community by giving them the information they need to make informed personal decisions about their public interactions. In addition, our local medical system is more than capable of handling additional surges and continues to increase their efficiency and overall case load management daily. What we are doing in Riverside County is working.

Our community, including our business community, must continue to be prepared to meet the needs of our neighbors that require additional protections under our current threat, including home delivery and mobile services that allow them to make the choices they require to stay safe. We must make masks and other PPE available to the masses, and we must continue to execute a robust education effort. We also understand the need for an enforcement effort, which the County has been diligently seeing to. The local business community is prepared to do what it takes to operate safely, and our local government is prepared to do so as well.

One of the things we all appreciate about your governance is your strong desire to address equitability issues within the State. Unfortunately, the current reopening phases as they stand have only served to perpetuate old imbalances and create new wealth inequities within this region. Large portions of our hospitality work force have been laid off, small business owners that have put years of sweat and equity into their shops and restaurants are watching their life's work shutter for good, and the overall economic health of our community is deteriorating fast. If we continue to lose the ability to serve food, host business group travel, and generally conduct business, even at a reduced capacity, irrevocable damage will be done to our residents that will take years to repair.

Yes, COVID-19 has tragically impacted the lives of many. But this economic turmoil we are experiencing is going to negatively impact the lives of everyone.

Our community is one we are immensely proud of, being both diverse and tolerant. We can tell you collectively Governor, the current State reopening plan does not work for this region. Our coalition signatures on this document represent Democrats, Independents and Republicans, large corporations and small business, non-profits and associations, and people across the geographic landscape.

This is not a partisan plea for help. This is a community begging you for relief.

We believe governance is a social contract between the democratic structures that constitute our State. We expect our local County Supervisors to make decisions that are in the best interest of this region, and we look to our elected Governor to listen. To accomplish that, the business community is prepared to work with our elected leaders towards practical, measurable steps to reopen our local economy.

Please help our community, which has a high percentage of minority and underserved populations being disproportionately impacted economically, get back to work.

Please help small business owners, the carriers of the California Dream, open their businesses backup.

We hope you agree Governor, being forced to choose between watching your family lose everything, or running the risk of operating your business illegally, is no choice at all. The County's plan as submitted


on August 12th strikes the appropriate balance between public health and economic survival. Our local health professionals have endorsed it, and we endorse it.

We hope you will support it as well.

From:
Riverside County Chambers of Commerce

Bette J. Rader

Bette J. Rader
Executive Director
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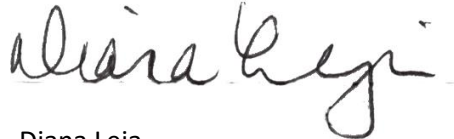
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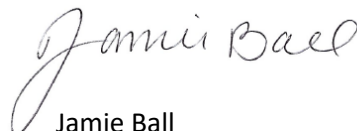
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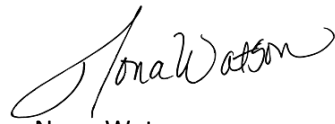
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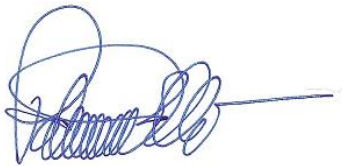
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