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WORKFORCE
CENSUS
CYBERSECURITY

April 20, 2020

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

Governor Newsom:

COVID-19's impact on our region, state and country cannot be understated. With more than 30,000 Californians testing positive and over 1,000 dead, we know that this virus was not and is not one to take lightly.

We also know that, were it not for the leadership at the state and county levels issuing Safer-at-Home orders and instituting social distancing measures, the outbreak would be far worse. San Luis Obispo County moved swiftly and issued a Shelter-at-Home order on March 18 – one day prior to the statewide order.

Our county Emergency Services Response has been exemplary, and our early response has paid tremendous early dividends. Our infection rate has been declining for more than 3 weeks, while our COVID-related hospitalizations have dropped dramatically. As of today, we have had 130 positive cases, with 111 fully recovered, only 3 in the hospital and 1 death – a resident over 80 with pre-existing health conditions.

At this point, given the COVID-19 numbers locally in San Luis Obispo County — and our healthcare capacity — this bipartisan group of local elected leaders asks that you allow our county to exercise local authority to implement a phased reopening of our local economy over the next three weeks.

Within a matter of days, the county will have fully developed and be ready to implement the *SLO County Roadmap for Reopening*, which is aligned with both state and federal guidelines. Our plan has been developed by local experts and takes into consideration the circumstances and facts in our region. We are ready to begin phased reopening based on science and expert guidance.

In addition to the extraordinary efforts our residents have taken to maintain social distancing and flatten the curve, our county (in partnership with our local hospitals and a number of private-sector businesses) has proactively prepared for a worst-case scenario. On the Cal Poly campus, San Luis Obispo County has built a 165-bed Alternative Care Site with the capacity to rapidly scale to 931 beds, if necessary. The county also has a large PPE stockpile and has the testing capacity to support its reopening plan in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

In short, we have been successful in our efforts to manage the virus's spread, and we have put in the work and made investments to prepare for any type of surge or second wave.

We've asked a great deal of county residents in the past month, and they have risen to the challenge. We've asked businesses to risk permanent closure, and to layoff beloved employees. Workers have been laid off without much in the bank to get by. We've asked families to avoid seeing friends and loved ones. We've asked kids not to go to school or play sports.

We have asked our residents to take these desperate measures because of the unique risks posed to the broader community by this virus so that we can flatten the curve and allow our healthcare capacity to catch up.

Now we need to move to the next phase, which is economic recovery. According to the L.A. Times, more than 2.5 million Californians have filed for unemployment over the past month, and an economist has predicted a statewide unemployment rate near 20% within the next month. A prolonged recession is likely and becomes likelier each day we keep workers from making a living.

And the public health stakes are high. We know that prolonged recessions cause dire public health issues of their own. According to a report by Harvard Public Health, recessions (and unemployment, in general) cause higher levels of chronic stress, which itself can give individuals a higher risk of heart disease, acute sleep deprivation, depression, decreased response to vaccines and an increase in smoking and drinking alcohol. One social science study links high unemployment levels to higher mortality rates, while another concludes that "economic uncertainty ... had direct effects on the risk of [child] abuse or neglect[.]" Yet another social science study linked high unemployment rates during the Great Recession to an increase in domestic violence, and we are seeing evidence of this in our communities already.

We must take steps now to cut down on the risk of prolonged recession and the resulting catastrophic public health issues that will inevitably follow from an economic downturn of that magnitude.

San Luis Obispo County made an early and deliberate response to the COVID-19 pandemic and has been successful in controlling the spread of the virus. We believe that the most recent public health data, in addition to our county's ability to continue monitoring cases and keeping the ACS at Cal Poly open, should allow the county to soon begin a science-based, thoughtfully-phased reopening of our economy that would allow our residents to get back to work.

We would appreciate your consideration of our request to reopen our county's economy under a local order developed in concurrence with the county's public health official, which will continue to protect the health and safety of our residents. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Jordan Cunningham
Assemblymember, 35th District



John Peschong
Supervisor, First District



Debbie Arnold
Supervisor, Fifth District



Caren Ray Russom
Mayor, City of Arroyo Grande



Heather Moreno
Mayor, City of Atascadero



Jeff Lee
Mayor, City of Grover Beach



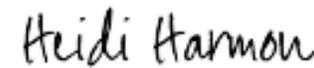
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