



July 9, 2020

Governor Doug Ducey  
1700 W Washington St  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dr. Cara Christ  
Director, Arizona Department of Health Services  
1111 E McDowell Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85006

Governor Ducey and Dr. Christ,

It has been extremely alarming to see Arizona's COVID-19 cases continuing to increase, with our per capita case rate now among the highest in the entire world. Today, 2,038 Arizona families are grieving the deaths of loved ones and each day brings thousands of new positive cases. Our hospitals have made it clear they are already overwhelmed and preparing for even worse scenarios and rationing of treatments. Arizona has been forced to formally activate crisis standards of care, which will mean patients will be scored and labeled, based on factors including age and prior health conditions, then potentially denied certain treatments if supply is limited. This is the overload of our hospital system you warned us about at the beginning of this crisis.

Arizona's slow-footed and inadequate response to this crisis, rapidly increasing numbers of deaths, case growth and diminishing hospital capacity mean we must take immediate and dramatic action. We sincerely hope that you will take those actions today in your press briefing. We join public health experts and our communities to urge the following common-sense steps:

#### **MANDATE MASK WEARING IN PUBLIC STATEWIDE**

New research provides additional proof that mask use is effective in limiting the spread of COVID-19, especially indoors. Since Governor Ducey lifted his prohibition against local elected officials taking action to protect their own communities, we have been encouraged to see many mayors and city councils lead in mandating masks in public. However, there are areas of the state that have not issued mask requirements, leading to confusion and inconsistent messaging about the effectiveness of their use.

The state must act immediately to mandate and enforce masks in public and ensure that all public employees have access to adequate supplies -- including state employees, public safety officers, and all teachers and staff in all of our public schools.

#### **IMPROVE TESTING ACCESS AND TIMING OF RESULTS**

Public health experts agree mitigation strategies must include robust testing and the results must be available quickly to allow for isolation and contact tracing. For months, Arizona was near the very bottom in per-capita testing, and while there has been some improvement recently, we remain in the bottom third of states. Our existing labs have limited processing capacity and there are unacceptable delays in receiving results, often reported to be more than a week.

In the press briefing on June 25, it was stated that Sonora Quest Laboratories would receive an additional Roche machine on July 6 to enhance test processing capability. Has that machine been received and is it currently in use?

We are encouraged to see recent acknowledgement that testing has been unequally available geographically. What does AZDHS plan to do to continue to ensure free and adequate tests are widely available to meet increasing demand? What is the status of the request for a FEMA testing blitz site that local leaders were requesting?

### **ENSURE TIMELY AND ROBUST CONTACT TRACING**

Maricopa County Department of Public Health has admitted many people testing positive are falling through the cracks and not becoming part of our contact tracing efforts at all. In their June 24 press briefing, MCDPH indicated they are unable to contact 5-7 percent of people testing positive because they lack contact information. MCDPH indicated only 20 percent of people who receive their text communications related to contact tracing actually complete the process and input the necessary information. In our state's largest county, these glaring failures to communicate with people who test positive are surely contributing to the spread of the virus.

In a recent press briefing, Governor Ducey indicated he would utilize the National Guard to help with contact tracing efforts statewide. How many National Guardsmen have been trained and are actively participating now? Why are National Guardsmen not being utilized to help with both contact tracing and with testing, especially in congregate care settings?

There have been references made by AZDHS and MCDPH about other groups, including university groups, who may be working on contact tracing. Please provide a complete accounting of the statewide efforts to assist in contact tracing efforts.

### **ADDRESS HOSPITAL CAPACITY AND WORKFORCE CONCERNS**

Arizona was the first state in the country to formally activate crisis standards of care in response to our rapidly diminishing hospital capacity. We understand new beds have now been added, but additional beds do not mean we have the staff or equipment to care for the patients in those beds.

To address our shortage of frontline healthcare workers, Governor Ducey indicated he asked the federal government to send 500 healthcare workers to our state. What is the status of that request?

### **PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BIPARTISAN LEADERSHIP AND OVERSIGHT**

As this health crisis advances, there may be additional solutions identified. We urge the Governor's office and AZDHS to establish several COVID-19 work groups, composed of public health and other experts, along with bipartisan policy makers, who will act in a transparent manner to consider implementation of additional measures.

We must act now to work with medical and education experts, along with parents and local education leaders, to address the safe reopening of schools. There must be statewide guidance and resources to ensure there are adequate plans to keep our students and all teachers and education staff safe.

The public deserves a complete and transparent accounting of all federal CARES Act funding received by Arizona, and we ask to have input and oversight on the use of the \$50M in Arizona General Fund dollars allocated for the Governor's discretionary use in our state's response.

Our focus must be on keeping people from contracting the disease and ensuring they can receive treatment if they do. We must provide decisive leadership so we can restore our economy and return to our jobs and schools as safely as possible.

Respectfully,



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Representative Charlene Fernandez  
House Democratic Leader



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Representative Kelli Butler  
Ranking Member – House HHS Committee