



October 27, 2020

Governor Gary Herbert
Dr. Joseph K. Miner, Director, Utah Department of Health
Kirk Bengé, San Juan County Public Health Director

To whom it may concern:

We recognize the many medical professionals who have been weighing in and advising State government officials on the COVID-19 outbreak and we appreciate their opinions and we desire to participate in slowing the spread. However, the latest changes at the State level to pivot to a transmission index, and the recent mask mandate by the Governor, has gone too far and doesn't take into account the many differences between each Public Health Agency and area in the State. We are concerned about the harm this will cause for our local businesses and the emotional distress for our citizens and have determined that we must make our stance clear. We want the authority to determine the best measures for the well-being of our residents including physical health, emotional health, and financial health, given back to local authority, including local public health departments and local government officials.

We feel that the new guidelines to determine high, medium, and low risk do not allow proper flexibility for businesses to work with their employees and customers to create an environment that is both safe and conducive to conducting business. In short, this is government overreach into private business and is too broadly applied to all areas of the State with little city-specific differentiation.

A "moderate risk" designation was applied to San Juan County last week and we have now moved to "high risk." Our concern is that even small outbreaks in other cities within the county will have the potential to move every city to "high risk" because of our small overall county population. The increased restrictions that come with these designations will harm our small businesses that are just now starting to see recovery from the economic devastation of this pandemic. It is extremely difficult to run a successful small business in a rural area and constantly changing restrictions for businesses could put them in further jeopardy. The mandates may seem simple to some, but our business owners and residents, like many people across the State, are exhausted. When the new mandates were announced, we had business owners make statements like, "Maybe I should just shut down." And "I guess it's time for me to sell." We had a business owner who said "we will lose our business" if they try to enforce a mask mandate in their office, where there are no more than 3-4 people at a time, and in an area where many people believe wearing a mask is their personal choice. The Governor's office has no idea what occurs in our county, likely hasn't been here in many years, and doesn't speak



personally with our local residents and business owners, which is why these decisions should be left to local authorities.

Please also consider that in a low population county with a large geographic area, the positivity rate does not necessarily equate to high risk. When people are being tested because they are symptomatic, it will drive the positivity rate above the moderate or high risk level in every review. Then considering if we have 20 positive cases in our entire county (the largest county in the State with the closest cities being 30 miles apart, and many areas being hundreds of miles apart), these guidelines allow for us to be continually shuffled between different restriction levels with each review.

We recognize the unprecedented public health issues we are facing and the toll it has taken on the people of our State in terms of human health, life, and economic prosperity. We ask that a more measured approach be used and more flexibility be offered to individual communities and businesses so they can implement strategies and procedures that protect their residents and customers while still allowing businesses to survive.

We ask that the Governor's office and local public health department prioritize educating our local government and our citizens so we can make informed decisions for the safety of our families, our residents, and our business that will be most effective in our area. We believe strongly in individual liberty and giving residents the right to choose the method that works best for them. Blanding City will continue to act upon the COVID information made available to us and will stand behind our residents to make choices to do the same. We do not favor the requirement of mandates that are too broadly applied and cannot be enforced.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe B. Lyman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Joe B. Lyman, Mayor
Cheryl Bowers, Blanding City Council
Robert Turk, Blanding City Council
Logan Monson, Blanding City Council
Logan Shumway, Blanding City Council

CC: San Juan County Commissioners
Phil Lyman, State Representative