

Julie Enea

Subject: FW: County Ad Committee on COVID-19 Economic Impact and Recovery
Attachments: COVID19-Reopen-Guidance.pdf

From: Steve Cortese
Date: Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 12:29 PM
To: Supervisor_Andersen <SupervisorAndersen@bos.cccounty.us>
Cc: Niroop Srivatsa
Subject: County Ad Committee on COVID-19 Economic Impact and Recovery

Supervisor Andersen,

I trust you and your family are staying healthy during these unprecedented times.

I received an email from Lafayette City Manager Niroop Srivatsa mentioning you were appointed to the Ad Hoc Committee to advise the Health Department on a COVID-19 sustainable mitigation and recovery plan. I had emailed you previously, but I'd like to take this opportunity to further communicate my concerns about the County Health Department's continued Shelter and Stay requirements. As you know Lafayette's business community is comprised mostly of small businesses and the Shelter and Stay has been a massive hardship to their livelihood. For most, their businesses are their families' and employees only source of income. Each week the economy is shut down adds hardship to these businesses and to the economy as a whole. The longer it takes to reopen the economy the longer it will take for their businesses to recover. Some will never reopen.

My company has over 120 tenants and every one of these businesses are prepared to operate under reasonable conditions that will protect their customers and employees. There are solutions we can enact today which will enable retailers, restaurants, salons and office users to operate while protecting the community. One example is the Reopening Guidance from the National Restaurant Association which was sent to me by one of my restaurants and is attached. But also please keep in mind that overly restrictive conditions such as curb side delivery may not be a practical solution that allows retailers to reopen. At the start of Shelter and Stay it was not practical for restaurants to do curb side delivery (essentially take-out) unless they were given free rent and even then most lost money. Those that opened did so to retain key employees and serve the community in a time of need. That has changed with a PPP forgivable loan, however the effectiveness of PPP is limited by two factors. First, the Shelter and Stay won't allow most businesses to operate and second, the eight week window to apply for forgiveness will start to close in about a month.

Shelter and Stay was the right thing. But what is the Health Department's end goal? Why is the criteria to reopen the economy for our County more conservative than the criteria for the State of California? We don't know because the Health Department hasn't communicated what data or metrics are driving those criteria. To date deaths in the USA due to COVID-19 are 21 per 100,000 of population. In California it is 5.83 per 100,000. In Contra Costa County it is 2.43 per 100,000. Compare this to the number of deaths last year in the USA by common flu at 18 per 100,000 and deaths last year from automobile accidents at 12 per 100,000.

At what point is the cost to society for the cure greater than the disease? Contra Costa County has performed extremely well during the Shelter and Stay, but continuing to require draconian restrictions will only cause people to resent their government, cause legal challenges to the constitutionality of their civil liberties being suppressed, and force people and businesses to defy the Shelter and Stay. We can already see all of this happening. Contra Costa County was one of the first in the nation to go into a quarantine but not one of the first in the nation to come out. To many of my tenants the Health Department's decisions appear arbitrary. Grocery stores, liquor stores and construction retailers can operate

safely, why can't other retailers and office users do the same? We must move faster to reopen the economy and thereby save the livelihoods that so many small businesses and their employees depend on. The longer we wait, the more businesses will fail and the more people will lose their jobs, and that will be a heavy cost to society.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Stephen A. Cortese
Lafayette, CA