

February 1, 2021

The Honorable Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310

Dear Governor Brown,

The Sandy City Council appreciates that COVID-19 represents a significant danger, particularly to the most vulnerable among us. This is an unprecedented public health emergency that warrants an unprecedented response from government, the business community, and individuals alike. We also believe that the rule of law is of paramount importance, and we respect all lawful directives issued by the State, whether statutes passed by the Legislature or emergency orders issued by the Executive and upheld by the Judiciary.

However, in areas currently identified as Extreme Risk, which includes Sandy, we believe it is possible for businesses to reopen in a safe manner using methods such as mask requirements, reduced occupancies, proper sanitation, and advanced air filtration / air exchange technology. We also believe that restrictions on family gatherings can be similarly eased while employing proper safety measures and precautions.

We recognize that the COVID-19 restrictions issued with the intent of saving lives have also created significant burdens on local communities. Our locally-owned small businesses, which are the economic lifeblood of our town, are facing significant and inequitable strain, particularly compared to the large corporations able to fall back on financial reserves to weather the storm. Restaurants and gyms in particular continue to face enormous economic hardship, notwithstanding the recent modifications allowing limited indoor activities other than dining.

In addition, while the current restrictions seem to have been driven chiefly by physical health considerations, many residents of Sandy are suffering from months of isolation, employment loss, and disruption to their daily lives. Activities known to ease psychological distress, such as those provided by gym facilities, have been heavily curtailed during this period. The inability of extended families to gather and interact has also contributed to considerable emotional pain. The pandemic response measures and associated effectiveness metrics should account for these impacts in a more holistic manner, incorporating the physical, emotional, social, and mental health needs of community members.

During the past year, our City has taken multiple measures to alleviate the unintended negative consequences of the COVID-19 restrictions, including providing relief grants to local businesses, instituting a financing program for new outdoor seating structures, and providing additional WiFi hotspots through our municipal broadband utility, SandyNet. Our local

businesses have also gone to great lengths and incurred significant expense to ensure the safety of their patrons. These measures are reflective of our community's desire to find innovative solutions to the challenges presented by this pandemic.

We urge you to modify the pandemic response approach to allow for similarly innovative strategies that can bolster communities while protecting public health in an equitable manner. In areas currently identified as Extreme Risk, which includes Sandy, we believe it is possible for businesses to reopen in a safe manner using methods such as mask requirements, reduced occupancies, proper sanitation, and advanced air filtration / air exchange technology. We also believe that restrictions on family gatherings can be similarly eased while employing proper safety measures and precautions.

Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, addressing this crisis with innovation and creativity, along with State-directed grants for struggling small businesses, would protect public health while ensuring that communities remain dynamic and vital now and when the pandemic concludes.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and we thank you for your leadership during this emergency.


Sincerely,



Mayor Stan Pulliam



Council President Jeremy Pietzold



Councilor Laurie Smallwood



Councilor Richard Sheldon



Councilor Kathleen Walker



Councilor Carl Exner



Councilor Don Hokanson