September 21, 2020

The Honorable Clint Hickman and
Members of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors
Maricopa County Board of Supervisors
301 West Jefferson Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85003

Dear Chairman Hickman and Members of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors:

The Greater Phoenix Leadership Health Sector Task Force was initiated in March of this year in response to the COVID-19 health crisis. Our objective is to mitigate the impact of the COVID virus on Arizonans and ultimately save lives. We have worked closely together over the past 6 months advocating safety protocols, removing barriers to medical care, and eliminating administrative rules to help ensure hospital capacity remains available during infection spikes.

As leaders in the health ecosystem, we thank you for supporting public health with the mask mandate, the most effective safety protocol to minimize infection with the exception of a shelter in place mandate.

We understand there is a small but vocal minority calling for the elimination of the mask mandate in Maricopa. We urge you to continue maintaining the mandate. To lift the mandate would be a devastating blow to the progress we have seen in the past few months of declining COVID infection and death rates in Arizona.

Until a vaccine is widely available, masks and social distancing are the most effective tools we have to save lives, short of widespread shelter in place orders that would devastate the economy.

- Multiple scientific studies have been published demonstrating proper mask usage reduces infection\(^1\). There have been no scientific studies that show masks do not reduce COVID infection.
- Our own experience in Arizona reflects the effectiveness of widespread mask usage. We came dangerously close to exceeding hospital capacity in Arizona over the July 4th weekend. Since the mask mandate was implemented, hospital inpatient rates and deaths due to COVID have continued to drop. An emerging concern we should pay attention to is the rate of disease transmission (RO or R-naught), which has increased over 25% in the past three weeks from .80 to 1.06. This suggests we are opening things to quickly and/or mitigation efforts like masking are not being adhered to as diligently as required. The United States has struggled more than any other country with mask mandates, enduring almost 21% of total deaths with only about 4% of the entire world population.
- According to a Harvard CAPS/Harris poll, 79% support a mask mandate (July 2020).

Science supports mask wearing. Removing the mask mandate before a vaccine is available will cost lives. The Greater Phoenix Leadership Health Sector Task Force urges you to maintain the existing mask mandate.

Thank you in advance for the courage to do what is right in the face of opposition.

Sincerely,
Physician Shortage: A Market Failure in Arizona’s Health System

Ann-Marie Alameddin
President and CEO
Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association

Dr. Susan Pepin
Managing Director, Health & Clinical Partnerships
Senior Advisor to the EVP
Clinical Professor
Arizona State University

Peter Fine
President and CEO
Banner Health

Pam Kehaly
President and CEO
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona

Tammy McLeod
President and CEO
Flinn Foundation

Kim Shepard
Market President, Arizona
Cigna

Linda Hunt
Sr. VP Operations and CEO, Arizona
Dignity Health

Dr. Aubrey Maze
West Group President
Envision Physician Service

Todd LaPorte
CEO
Honor Health

Robert Meyer
President and CEO
Phoenix Children’s Hospital

Dr. Jeffrey Trent
President and Research Director
Translational Genomics Research Institute

David McIntyre
President and CEO
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

Heather Kane
CEO
UnitedHealthcare

Steve Purves
President and CEO
Valleywise Health

Suzanne Pfister
CEO
Vitalyst Heath Foundation

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