



December 17, 2020

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Douglas A. Ducey
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Re: Request for winter pause in Arizona's reopening to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to support healthcare workers and preserve hospital capacity.

Dear Governor Ducey,

Thank you for your leadership on Arizona's COVID-19 response. The public health interventions that you and your team implemented last spring and during the summer were extremely effective in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives. Data reported by the Arizona Department of Health Services support this. A [report](#) published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Arizona's mitigation efforts show case counts began to sharply increase in May after your early stay-at-home order was lifted and executive orders around business closures expired. After you issued new executive orders in June and July to permit local mask mandates and to pause the reopening of businesses, case counts began to sharply decrease.

We supported your efforts then and further supported the triggers your administration put in place for reopening businesses. Unfortunately, statewide community spread is once again substantial, and has been for several weeks according to the ADHS COVID-19 data dashboards. This past week, hospitalizations for COVID-19 patients exceeded peak hospitalizations during the summer surge. Safety margins in our hospitals continue to erode with less than 10% statewide capacity reported for the past several days.

We deeply appreciate the recent steps you took to support hospitals with funding for staff, but even with this additional funding, our workforce is strained. The nationwide shortage of nurses and doctors is greatly complicating hospitals' ability to add the staff needed statewide to respond to this new surge. Moreover, there have been times during the past several days when hospitals had great difficulty transferring patients out, further jeopardizing care. We believe the delivery system may be fast approaching crisis standards of care.

With this in mind, we are asking you now to consider issuing new executive orders or reissuing ones originally issued in the spring and summer to temporarily pause the reopening of certain types of businesses or further limit their operations, to temporarily limit gatherings, and to additionally mandate statewide mask wearing.

We do not make these requests lightly. We know there is deep-seated opposition to some of these recommendations. And there are negative economic consequences to others, which have a downstream impact on public health. However, we believe urgent action is needed on a temporary basis to protect the immediate fragility of the healthcare delivery system and the long-term health of our workforce.

For the next six to eight weeks—while vaccines are being administered to healthcare workers and long-term care residents under Phase 1a of the state’s COVID-19 Vaccine Plan—we ask that you consider taking the following steps:

- Closing bars and nightclubs. These could be reopened earlier if the state returns to moderate community spread.
- Limiting restaurant operations to outside dining and take-out service. These restrictions could be lifted earlier if the state returns to moderate community spread.
- Except for essential services, limit public gatherings to no more than 25 people. Encourage people to only socialize with members of the same household. With holiday celebrations continuing through the New Year, we are incredibly concerned about multi-household gatherings which will become super spreader events.
- Implement a statewide and enforceable face covering mandate that focuses on business compliance rather than individuals.

We thank you for your leadership and the hard work of your administration. **At this moment, Arizona finds itself in a potentially catastrophic situation. The healthcare system is overwhelmed and on the brink of considering the need to implement crisis standards of care. We also face the reality that we will likely run out of available staff to care for patients who need our help.** Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We truly believe they will save lives.

In health,



Ann-Marie Alameddin
President and Chief Executive Officer
Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association



Will Humble
Executive Director
Arizona Public Health Association



Lee Ann Kelley, MD
President
Maricopa County Medical Society



Libby McDannell
Chief Executive Officer
Arizona Medical Association



Marialena Murphy, MSN
Board President
Arizona Organization of Nurse Leaders



Josephine Zammuto
Executive Director
Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association

cc: Cara Christ, MD, Director, Arizona Department of Health Services