

Dear Governor Polis,

We're grateful that you and the Colorado Department of Health and Environment are considering ways to help businesses, particularly restaurants, to reopen in a way that protects the health of customers and employees. We know you understand the mounting toll the pandemic is taking on Coloradans and the urgency to provide relief: with every week that passes, Colorado businesses are closing their doors permanently, laying off workers, and defaulting on their mortgages and leases. Many of these workers are the least able to sustain a long period without income.

In a letter dated Dec. 4, the Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC previously provided feedback, alongside 45 statewide business organizations including the Colorado Restaurant Association, Colorado Chamber, and NFIB, on the program piloted in Mesa County that CDPHE had prepared to roll out statewide. The current, revised program is significantly different than what these business associations requested as well as CDPHE's original proposal, and will result in considerable, unnecessary cost and administrative burden to businesses, our organizations, and to taxpayers.

After substantial review of these implementation costs, we must ask you to consider a different approach to meet our mutual goal of continuing to protect lives, while also protecting livelihoods.

The current proposal presents no cost-benefit to businesses. For example, the cost of an air-filtration system may run a restaurant \$20,000, while gaining them minor increases in capacity with which to recoup that cost. The proposal also requires significant cost, staffing, and infrastructure from the counties, municipalities, and chambers of commerce which must create and run the programs. Further, the proposal includes a number of onerous requirements that have no impact on disease transmission prevention, and some that are in direct contradiction to existing public health orders.

With reasonable assumptions, we estimate the cost of restaurant inspections alone to be nearly \$500,000. This assumes that community partners contribute employee time in-kind. It does not include the cost of a program administrator, inspector trainer, the costs of a marketing program to cover the program's availability and participating businesses, tracking and follow-up of complaints and corrections, and numerous other costs, all of which will quickly increase the total bill to already-strained local funding sources.

In Colorado, we rely on data to make our decisions. The state's own data shows that nearly all businesses are following health protocols, many even going above what is required of them, because they understand what's at stake. Health department data shows that businesses are not the source of outbreaks. In-airport dining is currently permitted and has shown no correlation to outbreaks. There is also a case to be made for giving Coloradans a place to gather safely, since data shows outbreaks CAN be traced to in-home gatherings, where people are unlikely to follow health protocols, and which citizens ARE holding as an alternative to now-shuttered restaurants.

We therefore urge you to consider a much more efficient solution that will immediately offer businesses relief: Revise the Public Health Order to immediately allow 25% capacity of indoor dining, with a maximum of two households per table, and increase that to 50% in two weeks if numbers continue to decline.

We work very closely with El Paso County Public Health and support their priorities of vaccine deployment and contact tracing. Our organizations continue to work diligently to share transmission

prevention information and ensure that our constituents are complying. The decline in cases in recent weeks, including over the Thanksgiving holiday (when restaurants were open), shows Coloradans are listening and continue to be committed to doing the right thing.

We ask you to partner with us to create a better way for Coloradans to safely work and serve their customers.

Sincerely,



John Suthers, Mayor
City of Colorado Springs



Mark Waller, Chair
El Paso County Board of Commissioners



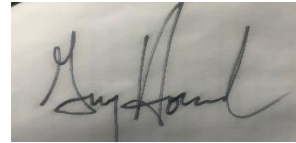
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