



LANE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Joe Berney
Jay Bozievich
Heather Buch
Pat Farr
Laurie Trieger

April 27, 2021

Governor Kate Brown
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown,

Lane County appreciates your leadership in navigating Oregon through these difficult times. We are committed to working with you as we face this fourth and hopefully last surge of cases and hospitalizations across that state until our collective efforts to vaccinate Oregonians can bring disease transmission to heel. **We write to you in partnership with the Chambers of Commerce from Cottage Grove, Eugene, Florence, Oakridge, and Springfield on behalf of our community.**

We know that you face a difficult decision between protecting state hospital capacity and protecting the fragile recovery now underway across the state. While the news that the COVID-19 county risk metrics framework may no longer be needed by the end of June is encouraging, many of our small businesses are still struggling to survive day-to-day after facing the uncertainties created by the pandemic and the closures required to drive down transmission. As Lane County enters Extreme Risk on Friday, we are concerned that an additional two months of uncertainty will be the tipping point for many businesses that have continued to make great sacrifices to support the health of our community. The vast majority of these businesses adhere to and enforce the public health guidelines to the best of their ability, but feel powerless given that social gatherings are driving the movement into High and Extreme Risk. While financial relief from government agencies has been critical, we hear repeatedly that equally critical to survival is advance notice of statewide reopening guidance that allow businesses time to properly prepare. Our business community was able to plan for the movement from Lower Risk to High Risk over the past two weeks because of clear communications from county government about the likely direction in case trends. Feedback from our businesses shows that having to pivot between unexpected changes in risk levels and restrictions can often do more harm, and discourages many from trying to remain operational. The future prosperity and economic welfare of our community beyond the pandemic relies on businesses surviving and being in a position to thrive post-pandemic.

Recognizing that a statewide reopening is tied directly to widespread vaccination, Lane County continues to administer the vaccine in our community as quickly as possible. As of today, Lane County has administered 276,177 COVID-19 vaccines, which represents over 52% of eligible adults and 44% of our full population. Just this past weekend alone, we worked with community partners to vaccinate over 11,000 people. Our current vaccination efforts are limited by supply, rather than demand- we have the capacity to administer vaccines in greater numbers than the current supply allows for. While we appreciate the efforts of the OHA vaccine allocation team to help us explore other supply channels, an increase in vaccine allotment from the state would greatly increase vaccinations in Lane County and move our state closer to reopening. Lane County expects to see demand for the vaccine increase should we enter Extreme Risk, and we need to have adequate supply of vaccines to meet that demand from our community.

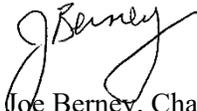
We remain committed to working with our respective communities to continue wearing masks, social distancing, being vaccinated when eligible, and adhering to the guidelines. To help us accomplish those goals, we respectfully request that you:

1. Increase the number of vaccines allotted to Lane County;

2. Direct OHA to review all current Sector Guidance for High and Extreme Risk categories against the current trends in case transmission with an eye toward ensuring that restrictions to commerce are aligned to where transmission is occurring;
3. Provide as much advance notice to counties about risk metrics framework movement as possible; and
4. Expedite the revision of the current County risk metrics framework as soon as possible.

We believe that fulfilling these requests will help us protect the public health of our communities, while also preventing permanent economic damage.

Respectfully,



Joe Berney, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners

