



Washington State Legislature

April 24, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
201 Legislative Building
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Counter-COVID Campaign, Phase II: *Decentralize and Recover*

Dear Governor Inslee,

We'd like to begin by commending you for the quick and decisive actions of Phase I of the COVID-19 response effort, *Stay Home-Stay Healthy*. The goal of that order was to flatten the Coronavirus curve and ensure our hospitals were not overwhelmed. To date, we have dismantled the FEMA field hospital without seeing a single patient, we are exporting ventilators to other states, and the halls of our hospitals are near empty. Certainly, we have achieved our Phase I goals.

Now is the time for Phase II. There are two competing theories for the best way to move forward: one is to gradually open as the number of cases fall and the ability to test for the virus increases. This centralized approach would apply one-size-fits-all policies evenly across the state. The second approach is to allow all sectors to open immediately, while maintaining certain safety protocols.

We would like to offer a third option. Washington state is comprised of 39 diversely impacted counties, each experiencing various levels of difficulties and each equipped with a different set of resources with which to respond. A one-size-fits-all policy may have assisted with slowing the spread of the virus, but it will prolong emotional and economic suffering across the state if continued in the same manner.

Today, we are advocating for a Phase II that implements *Decentralization and Recovery*. Each of the 39 counties in Washington are represented by elected officials and supported by staff capable of waging the tactical fight against the virus and its impact on their communities. They know, on a granular level of detail, the resources and response methods that will best suit their county. They also have the ability to be more directly receptive to citizens' needs on a local level and are in a better position to determine which restrictions to impose or modify, which to remove, and the proper timeframe in which to do so.

Empowering county-level leaders will have a number of positive effects: it will encourage creative solutions and the development and sharing of good ideas and best-practices, allow our economy to recover faster while still maintaining safety protocols, and it will enable you and your staff to focus on the larger strategy such as acquiring and appropriately allocating state resources and conducting interstate collaboration.

Governor Inslee, you have done a lot, but you simply cannot do everything. We have capable elected officials and staff ideally situated in each county to take much of this tactical level decision making off your shoulders and allow you and your staff to focus on higher level strategy. We believe it is time to let them do just that.

Thank you for your consideration. Let's get Washington safely back to work!

Respectfully,

cc. David Postman
Drew Shirk
Kathryn Leathers