



Board of Supervisors

District 1	Kevin Jeffries 951-955-1010
District 2	Karen Spiegel 951-955-1020
District 3	Chuck Washington 951-955-1030
District 4	V. Manuel Perez 951-955-1040
District 5	Jeff Hewitt 951-955-1050

May 14, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Riverside County's Readiness to Reopen

Dear Governor Newsom,

Riverside County appreciates your work and the steadfast support of your team, especially the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the California Office of Emergency Services, to slow the spread of coronavirus and the devastating impacts of COVID-19.

Locally, we have been responding to this pandemic since late January – ever since the first U.S. repatriation flight landed in Riverside County at March Air Reserve Base. This was well before the first locally-acquired case of coronavirus was detected on March 7. From the beginning, Riverside County has been steadfast in our commitment to protect every member of our community and, working collaboratively with our public, private and nonprofit partners, we have led the way in taking proactive steps on behalf of our residents.

Together, we avoided a surge on our local hospital system. When it comes to testing, we were one of the first counties to open community, drive up testing, the first to allow asymptomatic testing, and we continue to be the leader in testing volume among urban counties. (In fact, to date, we have tested well over three percent of our entire population.) Riverside County was one of the first counties in the state, if not the first, to develop proactive outreach teams to provide support and resources to all of our congregate care settings, including skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and homeless shelters. We started housing our homeless population in local hotels weeks before Project Roomkey was announced at the state level. When it comes to housing those experiencing homelessness, we have set audacious goals and we have repeatedly exceeded expectations by providing emergency housing and support.



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Unfortunately, while we have been flattening the curve of the pandemic, our unemployment numbers continue to sharply curve upwards. Local businesses, who have made immense sacrifices during this unprecedented public health emergency, are suffering through an economic emergency the likes of which we have never seen. Just as we acted proactively to protect our residents during the public health crisis, we must act now to help our residents through the economic crisis. To that end, Riverside County has developed a commonsense Readiness and Reopening Framework, based largely on the plan you and your team developed.

This framework provides a path to cautiously reopen based on public health data our economy with the proper health and safety measures in place. It recognizes that the health and wellbeing of our society is vital to developing and supporting thriving communities, dynamic healthcare services and a strong economy.

It also acknowledges that without a proper fiscal base, grounded on a healthy economy, the County of Riverside cannot provide essential services to protect public health and safety. The county, therefore, must work cooperatively with our private and nonprofits sectors, as well as labor groups, to support our businesses to cautiously reopen based on public health data as safely and as quickly as possible.

Today, we will meet, exceed or have a plan to achieve, six of the seven criteria identified by CDPH to accelerate through Stage 2 in the coming days. Specifically, the county has achieved the following:

- Plan to protect stage 1 essential workers
- Ample testing capacity
- Aggressive plan to expand contact tracing capability
- Exceeded a minimum of 35 percent surge capacity in our healthcare system
- Demonstrated ability to protect vulnerable populations
- Identified triggers for modifications

As it relates to appropriately determining the prevalence of the disease in the community, we request for the opportunity to make our case for a variance from the epidemiologic benchmarks outlined by CDPH. In our opinion, the metrics are unrealistic for urban counties, and Riverside County in particular, where our geographic size and population make it impossible that no deaths from COVID-19 will result in a 14-day timeframe. Fortunately, counties with greater population also have substantially greater public health resources for rapid response to local outbreaks. With a team of full-time epidemiologists and the ability for consistent, real-time epidemiological surveillance, the County of Riverside is better able to identify early triggers, areas for rapid intervention and provide timely contact tracing, as well as testing.



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For Riverside County and its available resources, it is appropriate to adopt the federal epidemiology benchmarks, which we are already achieving, as evidenced by our downward trend of cases, downward trend of test positivity, and downward trend of flu and COVID-19 like symptomatic cases.

On May 12, we unanimously approved our Readiness and Reopening Framework. We believe that this reasonable plan soundly meets both goals of protecting our public health and restoring our economic health. We are ready to cautiously reopen based on public health data. Further, we believe that, if given the opportunity to present this framework to your office, you will agree. We look forward to the opportunity to meet with you and/or your staff in the coming days.

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors is in support of this attestation, which was developed in collaboration with our Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser and will provide important framework for a regional approach to economic growth. Riverside County looks forward to working with the state as we move forward.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chair V. Manuel Perez
Fourth District Supervisor

Vice Chair Karen Spiegel
Second District Supervisor

Kevin Jeffries
First District Supervisor

Chuck Washington
Third District Supervisor

Jeff Hewitt
Fifth District Supervisor