



June 3, 2020

Statement of Support for Sonoma County Public Health Directives

As community health center leaders, we are writing in support of the Sonoma County Public Health Department. We believe their balanced response, including the current restrictions, has been made based on the best science available, with wisdom and concern for the collective long-term wellbeing of our community. As health care providers, we strongly support the actions that are being taken. As county residents, we are grateful to live in a community where we have such dedicated leadership. We firmly stand with Dr. Mase, who has led this effort with enthusiasm and compassion for all who live in our community. From the perspective of front line health care providers, our public health department has made balanced decisions regarding the reopening process. We believe that their plan will increase the likelihood that the recovery can be successful, and we must remain united in our efforts for a long-lasting recovery.

We live in one of the first regions in the nation where residents were ordered to stay home. Our success so far in flattening the curve is a testament to our willingness to unite against a critical threat. The community was asked to follow strict rules regarding shelter-in-place, and a network of support systems was established to help those most vulnerable. This has played a significant role in slowing the speed of infection; our job now is to sustain the success.

There is no perfect path to the incremental process of lifting the shelter in place order. Balancing the needs for the prevention of the spread disease with economic recovery involves extremely hard decisions which must be based on science and thoughtfully considered by experts in the field. Our knowledge of this virus is evolving. The evidence that people without symptoms can spread the disease highlights how our individual actions affect the the greater community. Success requires us all to take the necessary precautions and make personal sacrifices.

Equally important and distressing is that COVID-19 is hitting the Latinx and indigenous communities harder than any other ethnic groups in Sonoma County. Fully 70% of the people with COVID-19 in Sonoma County are from these communities - our fellow residents, many of whom have been carrying out the essential services that have made it possible for all of us to survive the disruption of our daily lives. Our gratitude to this community must include deep care for their welfare, increased attention to these disparities and determination to address them fully.

Timing is everything. Just because our hospitals have not yet been overwhelmed beyond capacity, does not mean we are out of the woods. We do not want to erase what nine weeks of successful response has given us. In the past 3 months, our health centers have cared for tens of thousands of clients who are coping with physical and emotional needs related to the pandemic. The wellbeing of our patients and community is our utmost priority.

Community spread continues to increase; cases are still on the rise with ICUs nearing capacity. Hospital officials cannot guarantee that if there is a surge they will be able to withstand the increased demand. Our success to date must not be undermined by a hasty response. While we recognize the very difficult economic impact this virus in having on our community, a healthy economy is not achievable without ensuring health and safety for workers, consumers, and the public at large. There is a series of criteria for the phased lifting of shelter-in-place that is supported by epidemiologists and scientific research. County Public Health Officers have the final authority to align with minimum requirements or to enact further safeguards based on their situations. With this

novel virus, and the complex and continuously developing science around it, heeding the recommendations of experts is the only wise course of action.

We are grateful to have Dr. Mase at the helm of the response to this pandemic. We will continue to speak out *against* the inequities in our community and we call on our entire community to put the health and safety of people at the front of decision making. During challenging times, we need to be united in our efforts to ensure that everyone is cared for.

Deborah Howell, CEO
Joan Churchill, CEO
Karisa Moreno, CEO
Donna Waldman, CEO
Kathryn Powell, CEO
Naomi Fuchs, CEO
Betty Arterberry, CEO
Cheryl Johnson, CEO
Jason Cunningham, CEO

Alexander Valley Healthcare
Alliance Medical Center
Center for Well-Being
Jewish Community Free Clinic
Petaluma Health Center
Santa Rosa Community Health
Sonoma County Indian Health Project
Sonoma Valley Health Center
West County Health Centers

